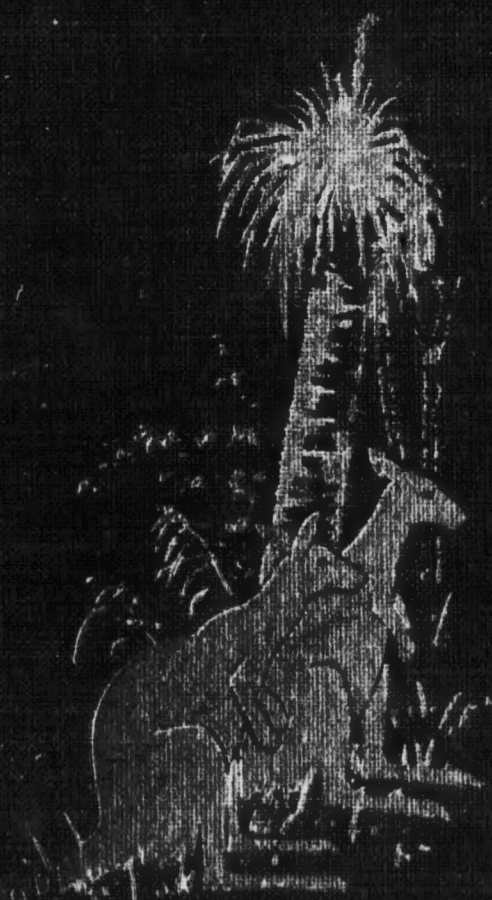
AUSTRALIAN BYWAYS

by

NORMAN DUNCAN



Jack Wells.

From Edith.
Dec. 25. 1915.

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NORMAN DUNCAN

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A CAMP IN THE DESERT

AUSTRALIAN BYWAYS

THE NARRATIVE OF A SENTIMENTAL TRAVELER

BY

NORMAN DUNCAN

AUTHOR OF

Going Down From Jerusalem

Finding His Soul, etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY

GEORGE HARDING

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CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
I.	All the Way to Freemantle	1
II.	The Man with Three Millions	6
III.	Bowling Along	13
IV.	The Revenge of the Big Australian	19
V.	To the Jarrah Bush	27
VI.	"Town Hall To-night!"	32
VII.	A Billy of Tea	39
VIII.	The Romance of Ol' Dan Dougherty	47
IX.	Coolgardie Forsaken	52
X.	Neighbors of the Golden Mile	60
XI.	The Eternal Flame	65
XII.	"Drink and the Devil"	71
XIII.	A Day or Two in the Drylands	76
XIV.	The Swagman's Story	85
XV.	Outcast	88
XVI.	A Wayside Inn	92
XVII.	Water!	97
XVIII.	A Parable of Two Camels	102
XIX.	A Night in the Open	109
XX.	Black Trackers	113
XXI.	Lore of the Desert Places	120
XXII.	Sydney to Queensland	129
XXIII.	Booked Through	132
XXIV.	The King's Highway	138

CONTENTS

CHAP.		PAGE
XXV.	"Smoke It Up!"	147
XXVI.	A Butcher's Philosophy	150
XXVII.	A Skeleton Bush	156
XXVIII.	Forty Mile Inn	161
XXIX.	The Scowling Man	165
XXX.	The Sentimental Smithy	169
XXXI.	The Musical Stockman	175
XXXII.	The Melancholy Landlady	178
XXXIII.	A Queensland Shower	183
XXXIV.	Troopers of the Outlands	188
XXXV.	License to Kill	195
XXXVI.	In the King's Name	199
XXXVII.	A Nigger in a Hurricane	207
XXXVIII.	Across the Coral Sea	212
XXXIX.	Mr. Todd	217
XL.	Quest of Romance	222
XLI.	Papua	230
XLII.	Casual Murder	236
XLIII.	The Corpse and the Constable	241
XLIV.	Cannibal Country	247
XLV.	Sorcerers' Work	254
XLVI.	The Invisible Snake	257
XLVII.	A Spiritualist of Ferguson Island	262
XLVIII.	Incantation	269
XLIX.	Thursday Island	276
L.	Tiger-shark	282
LI.	Pearl-shell and Piracy	288

ILLUSTRATIONS

A Camp in the Desert	*Frontispiece*	
Australia's Wooded Ranges Are New to the Ax	*Facing p.*	32
The Noon-day Rest	"	40
Some Set Out with Wheelbarrows—a Hundred Miles to Coolgardie	"	54
Once the Streets were Filled with Swagger and Riot	"	58
The First Adventurers	"	64
"Raising a Bit of Color"	"	72
On the Edge of the Drylands	"	98
The Best Trackers are Brought Straight from the Bush	"	116
The Royal Mail Crossing a Ford	"	140
Our Departure from Forty Mile Inn	"	178
A Friday-night Concert on the Beach	"	184
Native Boats Gather About, Eager to Barter	"	208
Gaudy Head-dresses and Wild-beating Drums Mark the Ceremonial Dance	"	238
An Attack upon Native Tree-dwellers	"	242
A Resident Magistrate	"	272
Hauling a Pearl-diver Aboard	"	284

AUSTRALIAN BYWAYS

AUSTRALIAN BYWAYS

I

ALL THE WAY TO FREEMANTLE

BOUND out to the Australian byways, with a first landing at Freemantle, of Western Australia, our way leading immediately thence to the gold-fields, the jarrah bush, the drylands, we came at last to Aden, at the extremity of the Red Sea, and there dropped anchor. This was a London-Sydney packet of fashionable consequence—London, Gibraltar, Marseilles, Port Said, Aden, Colombo, Freemantle, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney; and Aden was a point of departure for the India-bound passengers, who must there be transferred to a waiting boat of the line, for passage of the Arabian Sea, to Bombay, and for the American tourists, too, who had determined to omit Ceylon and the Australian détour from their long, round-the-world itinerary. It was late, then, of a hot, black December night. The lamps were out ashore. Warning points of red and green and yellow punctured the black: no more than that; and in the windy shadows between, cleaving the mystery, yet revealing nothing more than

swarthy glimpses, the little lights of the sampans twinkled and bobbed. Into this moving darkness—whence the voices of the boatmen, inimical to the imagination, baldly suggestive of the murderous savagery of that flaring Arabian coast we had come down—into this moist, moving darkness the India-bound folk, familiars of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, followed their own paths and were never seen again. Each to his own mystery: they passed—and no curiosity could follow on into the shadows to its satisfaction. Some had not been Out before—wretched targets, these, for any shafts of contemptuous wit: but most were leave-expired persons, going back, wise and lofty; and a sorry company all these fellows had been, beneath the laughter and twaddle, with the taste of Home still in their mouths—melancholy and out of temper.

There were captains, there were majors, there were pink subalterns, the like of that, returning to their regiments and ponies and to the merciless social warfare; there were civil-servants—glum, subdued, well whipped into reconciliation with their comparative inferiority; there were young men in a business way—of a cocky habit—going Out in bondage to the future, which might yield them, after fifteen years of servitude (said they), a decent competency at Home. There were individuals more and truly superior: there were some even less considerable. An outlandish crew, truly—repugnant to the large, free ways of all frontier places: they had no Colonial attitude; they had no Western flavor at all. Off they went, that night, from the glow and litter and warm farewells of our decks—bag, baggage, and women folk; and with them went some of the divert-

ing aspects of the voyage. Here, truly, had been a great deck-load of divertingly keen and practised brutality—brutality without malice. Differences—doubtless of some important social sort not specifically manifest—had in these past weeks been accentuated among them with cold good manners and amazing impudence by folk of kindliest ways with their own familiars.

"Wouldn't speak to me!" the Malay States Man of Business raged, a baleful eye on a stocky figure, departing, in comical little lurches, toward the gangway. "Shared the same room with him all the way from Marseilles," he gulped, "and he wouldn't speak to me! *Wouldn't even say good-morning!*"

"Who—the Majorman?"

"The damned cad!"

By and by the young Cable Operator went over the side for shore. Aden was his destination. He had come in the accustomed way of his duty from God Knows Where—some island out-station—to this blistering desolation for God Only Knew How Long (said he); and though he was only a boy—and though he had chosen this occupation for the sake of the great adventure of seeing the world—he had now no gaiety. He was, indeed, deeply disconsolate; and it seemed to me, then, regarding him—and often in remoter places—that Romance wears no pretty face under her shimmering veil.

Here at Aden the Hook-nosed Nobleman departed—going on a visit to some Indian Prince. He was a dark hawk; and so darkly had he hovered—and so obscure were his designs—and so sinister and sudden were his swoops—and so black were his manners

—and so churlishly had he dealt with his beautiful young wife, with such cold, niggard courtesy (if any at all)—that he inspired no friendly feeling. Truculent young men sought occasion of quarrel with him, on this account, and elbowed him out of the way, and scoffed in his hearing, and generally frustrated him, but with no happier issue than to elicit a frigid indifference toward their saucy behavior; and all the women scorned him—almost all the women—with such fine delicacy, however, in his presence, that he was fortunately not made aware of the true regard of many. Hence in the wake of the Hook-nosed Nobleman the Bibulous Relict went his perilous and unhappy way: he had lost his wife, poor fellow, not long before, and he was now desperately engaged in easing his sorrow with cocktails (before breakfast), whisky-and-soda (morning), gin (afternoon), champagne (dinner), starboard lights (coffee), and whatever sort of liquor or variety of concoction he chanced to think of (before turning in).

It is a poor stop-sorrow—and somewhat out of fashion; and in the case of the Bibulous Relict it seemed once more to fail.

"You shouldn't be on the drink, old chap," he would mutter, in sage and pious rebuke of his own conduct.

Here the American girls chattered good-by—bound hence to the sight-seeing paths of India. Wholesome, pretty, merry creatures, these—their social experience disconcertingly adequate, their graces blooming unconstrained. Their cup of popularity had overflowed: none more fair—none more winsome (said the knowing young subalterns in

their own vernacular)—than these awfully ravishing American girls. "And are *all* American girls —such a jolly sort? Really? I had no idea.'— genuine amazement, naïve condescension. Here, too, the Young Rajah disappeared, returning from Eton—a brown, flatulent, ill-conditioned youngster, inconsequential in European dress, but stalking conspicuous and with some new dignity, it seemed, when, east of Suez, according to the custom, he had put on his robes and turban. With the Rajah went the Dominie, of course—the preceptor of that young man. He was a favorite chap: he could at a moment's notice draw a lightsome Yankee rag-time from the piano—most agreeably aggravating to the feet—for the boat-deck dances; and though grave enough in the cloth, and a proper Dominie in every respect, he had won the spurs of secular good-fellowship by turning up, joyously ridiculous, as an intoxicated Highlander, kilt, bonnet, crimson proboscis, and all, at the masquerade under the big yellow moon of the Red Sea.

"Good-by!"

"Good luck!"

"Awfully jolly voyage!"

"Good-by!"

They went over the side.

II

THE MAN WITH THREE MILLIONS

AT Aden we took the hot, blue way to Colombo. Coming now to the Indian Ocean, we expected refreshment from the yellow oppression and molten stillness of the Red Sea. And there was refreshment. It was still sunlit and hot; but the wind blew free and the days sparkled, and the ship no longer crawled like a sluggish river-boat, but ran lifting to the swell, and there was a good feeling of escape into airy, wider spaces. And somewhat more than midway of the passage we came close to the good green earth again. Here in the way lay Minicoy —white beaches, curved, breaking reefs, waters of beryl and brown, vivid jungle and palm: all the flash and glint and greenery of a storied South Sea island. After the dun, clouded, far-away islands of the Mediterranean—after the low, wide sands of the Suez Canal and the barren shores of the Red Sea—Minicoy sprang all fresh and green and glorious from the sea. Here was no dusty shore—nor haze of distant land—nor barren coast—nor island in a mist of rain—but the living, fertile, familiar earth. A little schooner lay at anchor, snug between the white coral arms; and the shaft of a lighthouse, sun-soaked, glistened white against the blue and green of the world.

To us passing by—going in good companionship from a world to a world—the situation of the light-keepers presently appeared in the appalling reality of its isolation.

"A man who lives alone," said the Gray Australian Manager of a Sheep Station, "lives in singular danger."

We inquired concerning this aphorism.

"Once on an island off the coast of Victoria," the Gray Manager explained, "I fell in with the son of a light-keeper who had trained his hair to lie in the form of a bird's-nest."

There was some laughter.

"It is perhaps something to laugh at," the Gray Manager agreed, "but I assure you I did not laugh at the time. 'Young fellow, my lad,' said I, 'why don't you cut your hair?'

"'Why should I?' said he.

"'Well, for one thing,' said I, 'it's peculiar, isn't it?'

"'Not *too* peculiar,' said he. 'It's my own business, anyhow.'

"'It may be your own business,' said I, 'but I assure you, 'pon my honor, that I never before knew a young man to tempt the birds to nest on his own head.'

"By Heaven, that pleased him!

"'Don't you think,' said I, 'that it makes you rather ridiculous?'

"Well," the Gray Manager declared, "he thought it made him interesting! And do you know"—the Gray Manager's eyes now being wide with the wonder and horror of the thing—"I couldn't persuade the chap that it was at all out of the way for

a young Anglo-Saxon to wear his hair in the fashion of a bird's-nest? The more I jeered—and the harder I scolded—the better pleased he was with his invention. He had never been on the main-shore. There was no bit or rein on his notions: life at the light-house had given him no standards—nothing to conform to. I fancied, you know, that he was a bit off. I wronged him. He was quite normal. That lad went away to school a pitiable ass, his bird's-nest a perfectly sleek arrangement—but came back clipped like a sheep. And that's the point of it, and the pity of it: the crazy directions a healthy man's ideas will take when he lives too much alone. It's lonely on the sheep-stations of the Australian back-blocks, too," the Gray Manager went on, scowling. "A mob of human oddities there! Why, my God!" —the Manager's voice rose to a queer pitch of nervous alarm—"*anything* may happen to the man who lives too much alone. I used to think—back in the early days—sometimes, you know—that I was going a bit off myself. It frightened me. And I get in a blue funk still—when I recall those days."

There had come aboard at Marseilles, privately conducted by a weary little man, a tourist of gross looks but of amiable disposition and impeccable dietary habits. He was a foreign-American—a bulky, soiled, florid fellow, having a great neck, which rose sheer as a cliff from his fat back to his crown, and a slanting, narrow, corrugated forehead, and pale eyes, set very near, over high cheek-bones. It turned out that he mystified us all, until, nearing Colombo, his revelations relieved us. There were odds that he was a brewer; there were odds that he was a meat-

packer (this occurring to the English mind); yet he was neither the one nor the other. Out of Marseilles —doubtless to be of consequence among persons of consequence—he had made this boast: that though beginning life stark naked, in a mean neighborhood, without a dollar, he was at that very moment—sitting there in the Mediterranean sunlight of that very deck—possessed of no less than Three Millions. "I worked hard," says he, "and now I take my pleasure. No more business for me. Mein Gott! Whew!" he groaned, in such vital agony as to make one wonder. "Business?—it's awful!" And upon many of these Englishmen—the East-going Englishman not being used to Americans and the Atlantic passage—the announcement of this astonishing feat of accumulation had precisely the effect the American Millionaire intended.

It drew a quick, appraising—even momentarily respectful—glance to his very gross person; and it resulted—momentarily—in a more moderate tone.

"Pretty fair, eh?" the American Millionaire would inquire, with a smack of the lips, indicating ingenuous self-satisfaction. "Three millions?"

Rather!

"Eh?" he demanded, his head cocked, his round face radiant. "That's all right, ain't it—for a man like me? Gee—it certainly *is* all right!"

It measured little less than a miracle.

"We go 'round the world, my wife and me," said he. He laughed; he poked his auditor familiarly in the ribs. "She sees the cathedrals," he chuckled, "and I sit in the cabs!"

On this long voyage curiosity indulges in queer employments. How had this flabby fellow managed

to accumulate the Three Millions? Straight business? —he was far too stupid. Speculation?—he was infinitely too timid. It was an aggravating mystery. He had, perhaps, a merciless cunning; yet he was a coward—the sort of coward, it might be, who strikes on the sly, deeply, desperately, and runs away. All being said, however, here was a fellow with genial aspects, after all. His eyes twinkled: a nudge in the ribs made him spill laughter. There he would sit, bulk overflowing and protruding, fat legs crossed, cigar in hand, his large countenance beaming enjoyment of the scene and sympathy with its brilliant little diversions. But let one speak intimately of money —of the ways of gathering and the means of holding fast—and his face would screw up, his eyes waver, his great body grow restless; and sometimes, indeed—if one suggested panics and loss—he would drip with sudden sweat, the while protesting, excitedly: "I got mine safe! Nobody's going to rob me of nothing! No more business for me. Mein Gott! Whew! It's awful—awful!" All this mystified the inquiring mind and piqued its curiosity.

"I tell you," said he, of his own notion, this last night of the passage to Colombo, beginning the tale of the low cunning of his success, "I made my money in real-estate deals. I used to be a Police Captain in New York. . . ."

And then we thought we knew the beginnings of that fortune.

Hitherto we had followed a main-traveled road. London to the East: it is a highway thronged with merchantmen and mail-boats—the motley and aristocracy of the sea, surging west and east: tramps,

pilgrim-ships, liners, old wind-jammers, lateen rigs, men-o'-war. Now we entered a long by-path, like a wilderness trail; and we traveled without company, meeting none. Colombo to Freemantle of West Australia: it is nine days' sailing—a blue, breezy way over the Line and across the Trades. Few follow it; many will. Australia is a vast, inviting place: it measures four hundred and twenty-two miles more in area than the United States of America proper, it is more than one-fourth the area of the British Empire, it equals nearly three-fourths the area of Europe; and in these early days it has something less than one and one-half inhabitants to the square mile. And so wide is the land (our Australians maintained)—and so fertile are the possibilities of much of it—and so profitably does it stretch into the abundant tropics—and so free and beneficent is the disposition of the government—and so just are all the laws—and so large is the aspiration and power of the people—and so determined are they to conceive and maintain liberty as between the rich and the poor—that the overflow of humanity will presently set toward the Southern Cross and occupy all these waiting acres.

It is a singular thing that no Englishman will on this voyage be mistaken for an Australian if he can help it.

"I suspect that Cockney," said one.

"Of murder?"

"No," the Englishman replied, gravely concerned, as though it mattered greatly; "of being an Australian."

"But he *says* he's an Englishman!"

"Ah, well," he rejoined, cunningly, "they often do that, you know!"

Travelers bound for Singapore and Hong-Kong went ashore with the tea-planters of Ceylon. Our company dwindled. Beyond the color and soft movement and mellifluous voices of Colombo—its shady highways, its temples, its barefoot Eastern throng, its busy harbor—we numbered not more than fifty. Most were Australians, in good quality, like the people of our West, with some surface differences, but none of very great account. They were going home from Home—as they put it. I recall that the Gray Station-Manager said this: that, having a son to settle, he had been gone on a visit to all the other stock-lands—South Africa, the Argentine, the American West—but had spied out nothing in the world to compare in sound opportunity with the Australian acres, upon which he would surely establish the boy (said he) for his venture. I recall, too, a stolid Englishman, traveling with all the less conspicuous appearances of great wealth, mixed with astonishing originality of attire, such as trousers creased in reverse of the fashion (to port and starboard)—an odd fish, truly, whose vast fortune had of itself evolved (they explained) from a game of euchre, played in some lonely camp of the early days, for a fifth interest in what is now become the Amazing Mine.

It is a horsy people.

"*There's* my beauty!" said the Australian Stock-Broker, displaying the photograph of a sturdy little boy astride a slim horse.

"Fine boy," I agreed.

"Oh," said he, "*that's* my son!"

"Fine horse," said I, quickly.

III

BOWLING ALONG

A SERIOUS-MINDED Sports Committee, chosen with serious and exact observance of the customs established, held serious meetings under the smoking-room clock, and talked a great deal with serious countenances, in seriously modulated tones, and seriously consumed ginger ale, lemon squash, and whisky-and-soda, and at last, much to the surprise of everybody, announced, with jolly faces, a tournament of games and jousting of the most delightfully lively and frivolous description. Nor was it in meager measure: the Atlantic passage sometimes provides a beggarly afternoon of these pleasures; but the Australian voyage prescribes and invariably accomplishes whole days of them, all governed by the traditions, so that the suggestion of an innovation is dismissed with "It's never been done before, you know!" and an objection is disposed of with "But it's *always* been done that way, you know!" And so there were quoits and shuffle-board, singles, doubles, and ladies; and there were potato races, thread-the-needle races, three-legged races, and sack races; and there was cock-fighting in a circle, pillow-fighting on a spar; and there was a preposterous contest in which the wretched competitor was suspended by

the heels from an overhead stanchion and invited to make a chalk mark on the deck as far away from his perpendicular as he could manage to stretch himself.

These were lively days, indeed, lived rolling through the breezy sunshine; and for all the good feeling and all the laughter of them, according to the custom, the haggard Sports Committee was voted the thanks of all the company, in a warm little speech after dinner, and then most heartily toasted.

"Your health, gentlemen!"

"Hear, hear!"

"If I may be permitted," the Chairman of the Sports Committee began, "to say a mere word or two in response to—"

"Oh, *don't* do it!" groaned the Tired Old Globe-Trotter, much more lustily than he knew.

"Ha, ha! Haw, haw!"

"Shame!"

"Hush!"

The Chairman of the Sports Committee was not to be deterred, you may be sure, by the distress of the Tired Old Globe-Trotter.

Deck cricket—for which the leeward boat-deck was inclosed with a net—was a regular employment of the afternoon; not the least astonishing thing about it being this: that the players turned out to the exercise in flannels and blazers, in every respect the correct attire for chaps at cricket ashore. And in the course of the voyage Second Class challenged First Class. First Class accepted the challenge; and First Class desired to know: Where did Second Class prefer to play? Second Class communicated

a reply to the effect that Second Class preferred to play on the second-class deck. Second Class, it was pointed out, had challenged First Class *to come over and play*—that being, it would be recalled, the exact form of the challenge. Just so; but First Class *was quite sure* that the first-class deck would turn out to be a more spacious and altogether agreeable field, and accompanied this communication with an invitation to Second Class to come over and have it out. Second Class accepted the kind invitation of First Class for the following afternoon at 2.30 o'clock—*provided*, however, that First Class would indulge Second Class with the compliment of a return match on the second-class deck, and afterward drink tea with Second Class in the second-class saloon. All this turning out to be agreeable to both sides, First Class appointed a Committee, the same being a Committee of the Whole Team, to entertain Second Class after the match, and thereafter placidly awaited the coming of Second Class, confident, now, that nothing could go amiss.

Nothing did go amiss. Both games were played with the utmost good feeling on both sides: whereafter there was no further communication of First Class with Second Class, nor of Second Class with First Class.

"Some jolly chaps in Second," yawned First.

Not *too* bad!

"Some decent blokes in First," yawned Second.

It was not the way of Second Class to skulk and envy and feel ashamed. Second Class respectfully respected itself—and immensely enjoyed itself. Second Class had a masquerade—occasional dances, too—and indulged in Calcutta Sweeps. And the

upper crust of Second Class dressed every night for dinner.

East of Suez came the Calcutta Sweeps. Here is a traditional diversion of these seas—a great pool on the day's run; and it was managed in this wise: As many chances were sold, at a shilling each, as the Calcutta Committee for the day could manage without straining, one to the timid or pious, as the case might be, and twenty or thirty to all true speculators. The Captain declared a number as being the best probability. It was 380. Twenty numbers were taken above this, and twenty below, with a high field (above the highest number) and a low field (below the lowest); and there was a first prize, the winning number, ten per cent. deducted for the day's charities; and there were two second prizes, ten above the winning number and ten below it, ten per cent. deducted for charity. Eventually there was a drawing, conducted with great ceremony by the Calcutta Committee, to determine the holders of the forty-one numbers and the high and the low fields; but these fortunate folk did not possess final title to the numbers they had drawn; all the numbers were put up at auction, the proceeds going into the pool, and the holders were entitled either to accept one-half the amount bid and yield all interest to the bidder, or to pay half the amount bid and retain a half interest in the outcome.

And so syndicates were formed, and shares were bought and sold, and the current was estimated, and the Chief Engineer was subtly sounded, and the revolutions of the screw were counted by old gentlemen with their ears cocked and watches in their hands.

As for the ultimate value of the pool, that depended on the bidding, and the spirit of the bidding depended largely on—

"A beggarly £80 in the pool!" cried the auctioneer. "Fie, gentlemen! One might think you had not dined."

Shortly after dinner, or sometimes late of a warm afternoon, a bell was rung, like a general alarm, by some muscular, earnest steward—clanging a stirring summons along the decks and through the corridors—to announce the auction. And the deck chairs were abandoned, and all the shadowy corners were deserted, and the staterooms were vacated, and Cocktail Alley was emptied of cigarettes and liqueurs, and there was something nearly resembling a stampede to the smoking-room, where the auctioneer and his clerks were waiting. The smoking-room overflowed with the ladies and gentlemen, all flashing and glistening and buzzing, and the doors were jammed with perpendicular black and white, both lean and portly, and heads were thrust through the port-holes (bids being accepted from any vantage). And presently the auctioneer perched a rusty top-hat over his right ear, noisily employed his gavel, made a speech, appealing to the beneficence of the ladies and gentlemen in behalf of the widows and orphans of all sailors, and thereafter proceeded to dispose of the numbers to the highest bidders, bowling along so vivaciously, indeed, with a patter so lifelike and witty, beseeching the ladies to bid up the numbers of the popular gentlemen, whom he named, and entreating the gentlemen to the gallantry of bidding up the numbers of the most popular ladies, whom he did not name—all so cunningly that he

was voted the very most amusing auctioneer, as well as the most successful, who ever sold Calcutta numbers (to which even the Tired Old Globe-Trotter agreed).

In the course of the graceless business of hawking Calcutta shilling-chances, one morning, the Polite Australian encountered the Member of the Best London Clubs.

"Calcutta, sir?" he invited, pencil poised.

A stare was the best he gained.

"I beg your pardon, sir, really," he stammered, flushing, "but unfortunately I—"

"Can't you see," the Member of the Best London Clubs scolded, petulantly, indicating a man with whom he was passing the time of day, "that I am talking with a gentleman?"

"I thought *I* was," murmured the Polite Australian.

IV

THE REVENGE OF THE BIG AUSTRALIAN

IT was not incongruously splendid; it was not a floating hotel—the Atlantic boast. Here was an airy, adequate, austerely simple ship—a disciplined vessel in every respect. There was nothing tawdry: the very decorations lifted their eyebrows and remarked in a superior fashion, "Observe that there is nothing vulgar about *us*, and permit us to *hope* that there is nothing vulgar about *you!*" Breakfast was of small consequence in a social way. A mechanical "Good morning" passed muster. Custom seemed to allow some latitude of behavior at luncheon, too—a dilatory arrival, a departure out of season; but dinner was conducted with great propriety, as on shore—that decorum which celebrates the Line above all other lines. And this was engagingly remarkable in contrast with the confusion and easy manners of the Atlantic passage. There were no *tête-à-tête* tables—there was no mixture of tweeds and broadcloth, of shirt-waists and *décolleté* gowns—there were no bewildered stewards—there was no clatter of dishes—there was no babel or impropriety of any sort whatsoever. It was an orderly procedure, timed and directed by a grave upper-steward with a gong, course upon course, until, in

due time, the ladies graciously moved, and the amiable, flowing hour-and-a-half came to an end, to be somewhat prolonged with liqueurs and cigarettes in Cocktail Alley and the smoking-room, before the languorous night drew its own followers to the boat-deck and to a sentimental worship of the stars.

It was at dinner that the Big Australian trapped and confounded the Chief Officer who had given him offense: the simple passage being remembered thereafter as The Revenge of the Big Australian.

"I say, Chief," said he, with wily humility, "would you be good enough to help us with a little problem in navigation?"

To be sure!

"Quite so," said the Big Australian, his gray eyes glittering. "Suppose, then, that you were at the North Pole—"

"I never was, you know!"

"Of course not! But suppose you were. And suppose you sailed directly south—"

"It couldn't be done!"

"Oh, pshaw, Chief! Of *course* it couldn't be done. But if possible, *suppose* it could. Suppose you were at the North Pole—and suppose you sailed directly south *one* hundred and sixty miles—and suppose you sailed directly east *two* hundred and sixty miles—"

"Pencil? Thank you. Carry on."

"What course," the Big Australian gravely propounded, "would you steer to get back to your starting-point?"

"I am at the North Pole," the Chief Officer rehearsed. "Do I take you? Quite so. I sail south

one hundred and sixty miles—I sail east *two* hundred and sixty miles. Quite so. What course, then, shall I sail to get back to my starting-point? Is there an argument? Quite so. Let me see if I can't solve this for you. . . . Hm-m. . . . Quite so. . . ." It was pitiful: the Chief Officer—and an excellent officer he was—had fairly gulped the Big Australian's obvious hook. And the simple fellow turned over his menu card, and gazed ponderously at its blank surface, and put his head on one side, and wrinkled his brow, and pursed his lips, and drew a triangle, and described an arc, and began to calculate like lightning—indulging in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, with flights into those higher mathematics, doubtless, which have to do with the mysteries of navigation. Time passed all too delightfully: the rose and blue faded beyond the rolling port-holes—and the yellow light of the saloon asserted itself above the failing glow of evening—and the merriment all roundabout seemed loud in contrast with our silence—and the brown stewards passed in horror of this interruption—and the Big Australian twinkled a naughty and merciless enjoyment—and we all of us, a breathless company, in heathenish amusement, continued deeply intent upon the Chief Officer's engagement with his problem, half dreading the effect of the disclosure upon his pride and remarkable dignity.

"In general terms," the Big Australian softly insinuated.

"Course in general terms?"

"Quite so."

It was explicit: the Chief Officer could not now take sanctuary in the Magnetic Pole and the devia-

tions of the Magnetic Needle. "A difficult matter," he complained, scowling, "to work this out offhand."

"Oh no!" scoffed the Big Australian.

"But I say it *is!*" the Chief Officer snapped.

"In general terms?" the Big Australian mocked. "Nothing simpler, my dear chap!"

"My *dear* chap," the Chief Officer demanded, angrily, "what course, in general terms, would a *landsman* sail to get back to the North Pole?"

"North," said the Big Australian."

The Chief Officer was very much annoyed.

We crossed the Line. There were no ceremonies: some accident—occurring on a long-previous voyage—had issued in the discharge of Father Neptune from his ancient activities. It was hot weather, to be sure—blazing days, spent in shade and sleep, and moist nights, passed in the wind on deck; and little gusts of lukewarm rain, seeming to gather under the blue sky n ar by, swept the decks like steam, drying almost instantly in the sun and hot breeze. And now the English Officer of Militia, doubtless aggravated by the heat, stumbled into the center of the spectacle. He was a gray, crisp Englishman, creased and combed and waxed, carrying himself with precision, in a hothouse m'litary way, but turning a bit portly under the belt. It seemed he would have no traffic at all with Australians: he mistrusted Australians, he detested Australians (said he)—their deeds, their manners, their code, their damned habitat. He was going Out (said he) to protect his Australian estate from a Gang of Rapacious Robbers. Indeed, he went the length of declaring—which no man of reason and sensibility

should do—that the present generation of Australians resembled in its practices those thieves and thugs among its forefathers who had been sent out to the colonies for their country's good. These bitter words were uttered with a quick flush, an angry flash: they were manifestly the explosion of pique and prejudice; and more than one indignant Australian promptly challenged the justice of their employment.

It seems that the grandfather of this Officer of Militia had in his time acquired a certain tract of good Australian earth, either by purchase, which was honorable, or in reward of service to the government of those days, which was even more honorable still. In the course of events this selfsame tract of land had descended to the Officer of Militia; and the Officer of Militia had thrived large and happily by means of it—and lived in England, an absentee landlord, as the Australian phrase angrily puts it. It is, however, the custom of the various Australian states to "resume" for closer settlement or other purpose such tracts of land as may appear to be needed to increase the welfare of the whole people. No landlord is wronged of his estate: generally speaking—governments being notoriously free in this respect—notice of resumption is an occasion of rejoicing. New South Wales had cunningly resumed the lands of Government House and evicted the Governor-General of the Commonwealth. Why should any state hesitate over an absentee English Officer of Militia? And the lands of the Officer of Militia, being needed, had been resumed at a price—the detail of the bargain still hanging fire, I fancy. But in the mean time the government had disclosed its

purpose to undertake certain very important public works in the immediate neighborhood of the resumed tract, whereby its value would be enormously increased: the difference would be equal to the gulf between farm-lands and suburban lots; and it was for this reason that the Officer of Militia was bound Out to protect his inheritance.

It was at the masquerade that the Big Australian fell foul of the Officer of Militia. For the time being the Officer of Militia represented a Master of the Fox Hounds; and the Big Australian—what with powder and paint and borrowed petticoats and jewels and curls—more or less nearly resembled a member of the very back row of the *corps de ballet* except for his cigar.

"Your government is rooking me!" the Officer of Militia raged.

"Faugh!" snorted the Big Australian.

"Isn't it my land?"

"Aren't we paying you for it?"

"It's my land, sir, and you're not paying me what it's going to be worth."

"*Going* to be worth!" the Big Australian laughed. "Ha, ha! Why should we pay you what it's *going* to be worth? What have *you* ever done—what *could* you do—to make it worth what it's going to be worth? Ha, ha!"

"When the government builds—"

"*You* aren't putting up any buildings!" roared the Big Australian.

"It's my land!" bawled the Officer of Militia.

In this way the encounter progressed from the glow of an agreeable academic discussion to the white heat of recrimination. It could not be otherwise.

The Officer of Militia, steeped in the land-owning traditions of his own countryside, was quite incapable of discovering the least ray of justice or reason in the Big Australian's argument; and the Big Australian, bred in company with the amazing new Australian ideas of what they call human rights, could descry nothing but stupidity and greed and aristocratic outrage in the argument of the Officer of Militia. It was no mere difference of opinion as between individuals: it was something deeper and far more significant than that. And meantime the ship rolled along toward the Trades—and the music flowed strumming and tinkling with the soft night wind toward the stars—and the dancers circled close to the perspiring disputants and dodged alarmed away—and the lights glowed green and red and yellow—and the varicolored bunting fluttered in the breeze. And presently the Pierrot, with the Tramp Captain and the Beef Eater, edged behind the Big Australian, to encourage him, and Sir Walter Raleigh, with the Preposterous Nurse Maid and the Arabian Sheik, backed up the Officer of Militia. The Big Australian quivered with rage until his curl trembled and his diamonds flashed fire and his spreading skirts rustled their indignation; and the Officer of Militia came near bursting his red coat with explosive pomposity.

"You equivocate, sir!" declared the Master of the Fox Hounds.

"Equivocate, sir?" cried the Lady of the Ballet. "Do you mean to insinuate, sir, that I lie?"

"I say you equivocate, sir."

"If you accuse me of equivocation again, sir," roared the Lady of the Ballet, thrusting his powdered

face, his rouged cheeks, his penciled eyebrows close to the flushes of the Master of the Fox Hounds, and shaking his bejeweled fist under that indignant sportsman's very nose, "I'll knock your block off!"

And the Officer of Militia chose the better part of valor—a chilling disdain.

V

TO THE JARRAH BUSH

WE left the ship at Freemantle, the chief port of Western Australia, going thence twelve miles up the Swan River, in a little boat, like a ferry, to Perth, the capital of the state, a comfortable city of approximately forty thousand, founded in 1829. It was January weather—the blazing heat of an Australian midsummer. It was not our purpose to linger at Perth: nor in that busy, pretty city was there anything to engage our interest, above the bush and gold-fields and drylands to which we were bound. It was like a Canadian town set in a Californian climate, its colloquial speech flavored with Cockney: a busy city, given agreeably to half-holiday pleasures — cricket and the race-track. Traveling south, by rail, next day, toward the heart of the jarrah bush, in the southwestern corner of the continent, we fell in, at a dull wayside station, with a brisk, bristling, tense young man of the country, a perfervid young fellow whose convictions were mightily assured in respect to the rights of the people (said he) to the resources of their own domain. Opposition wilted in the red heat of his convictions: they flamed like a consuming fire. Contradiction was sucked into a roaring furnace of scornful argu-

ment, vanished forthwith in thin smoke, left nothing behind but a pitiful residue of ashes, upon which the young man's unhappy opponent was left at leisure to gaze in shamefaced and stupefied wonder. Jarrah, said he, was at once a disgraceful and exquisitely humorous example of the greed of private enterprise and the astounding futility of the traditional forms of administering the crown lands of the colony. In this he was no mere saucy partisan; he was a furious evangelist. And his eyes blazed with zeal, and his face was flushed with indignation, and he was in a hot sweat of energy to be about the business of reform; and the sharp slap of red fist into calloused palm, with which he pointed his declarations, disclosed the ruthless quality of his will to tear the world down and rebuild it in a flash according to the very newest Australian notions of what constitutes an efficient and agreeable world to live in.

Presently, said he, the state would be cutting jarrah and karri on its own account. And thank God for that! It was preposterous that the state had not long ago set up a mill in the jarrah bush--preposterously conservative, preposterously indulgent, preposterously wasteful, preposterously slavish and cowardly and wicked. What was the state for? Be hanged to private enterprise! Were we living in the last century? Were there no new ideas abroad? Had the people not awakened? Private enterprise, sir, had been exposed. Private enterprise had exported millions of pounds sterling worth of jarrah. Private enterprise had smugly pocketed the profits. And whom should the jarrah forests properly enrich? Private enterprise? Bosh! Was it for a mo-

ment to be maintained that the people had enjoyed a fair share of all this wealth?

"Royalties?" I ventured.

"Royalties!" he scoffed. "Ha, ha!"

My suggestion was a vanishing puff of smoke. A snort of laughter had consumed the substance of it.

"Wages?" said I.

"Wages!" he roared.

My contention was ashes.

"Please God," the young zealot declared, gravely, "we'll wipe private enterprise off the map of Western Australia!"

"But—" I began.

"Man alive, there *isn't* any But! They're intolerable to social enterprise—these damned hampering Buts and Whys."

"But—" I tried again.

"My friend," said the young man, looking me straight in the eye with disconcerting curiosity, as though I belonged to an antediluvian generation, and should be heartily ashamed to cumber the heritage of my aspiring descendants, "what we demand out here in Western Australia is Progress."

I capitulated to his suspicion.

"Out here in Western Australia," he went on, now putting his hand on my shoulder in the intimately benevolent fashion of a young country preacher, "we are engaged in a social experiment that will astound the world." He paused. "Give us fifteen years," said he, exalted, like a prophet—"give us just fifteen years, my friend, and we'll show this generation how good a place this little old world can be made to live in." Again he paused. "My friend," he concluded, with a flash of the eye so good to see that it

warmed our respect, "it's good to be alive; it's good, good to be alive, in these days—away out here in Western Australia! Australia," said he, "is the place where the big battle is."

We liked his breed.

Now, presently after that, in a compartment of the train, we encountered an old codger with an Australian "bung" (fly-bitten) eye and a marvelously surly disposition for a man of any age or condition. He was hunched in a corner, scowling and morose and scornful, sucking his pipe in a temper which seemed to be habitual, and biting the stem as though he had nothing better than that poor thing to punish in solace of his mood—a sour old dog with a great bush of indignant iron-gray whiskers. He had no prosperity; he was seedy and gray and malcontent; and as it turned out he was in boiling dissatisfaction with the government—the damned meddling government, said he. Too much law in the country, said he; and they were making new laws in Perth, for ever making more laws—pages of law, books of law, tons of law, miles and miles of law! It was no country for a man of spirit. It was a law-ridden country. There was no free play. A man couldn't follow his fancy. A man was regulated: his sitting down must be accomplished according to law; his rising up and going forth. What happened to a man of spirit—a man with the fire and ingenuity to strike out for himself and begin to get along in the world? Was he encouraged? Was he let alone? No, sir! The government straightway devised a law to deal with his enterprise. It was meddle, meddle, meddle! The gov-

ernment meddled more men into the poorhouse than it helped to keep out.

"Do you reckon," he demanded, "that a bloke can own a cow in this country?"

We reckoned that a bloke could.

"Naw," said he.

"Suppose," we proposed, "that a bloke bought and paid for a cow?"

"It wouldn't be his cow."

"To whom," we inquired, "would that cow belong?"

"Gov'ment."

"But—"

"Taxes," he elucidated.

It was still obscure.

"If I buy and pay for a cow," the old fellow went on, "I have a right to think that that cow is mine. And she ought to be mine. That's argument. You can't dodge it. But if I have to pay a license to the gov'ment every year for the privilege of keeping that cow, she isn't mine at all. Is she mine when she's two years old? Is she mine when she's ten years old? No, sir; she's never mine. That cow belongs to the gov'ment. I only rent her. I couldn't pay for her and own her if we both lived to be a thousand years old. I could milk that cow, and sell that cow, and kill that cow; but that cow could never, never be mine. I'd be paying for that cow to the day of her death. And that's why," he added, cunningly, "you don't catch *me* owning no bloody cow in this bloody country!"

VI

"TOWN HALL TO-NIGHT!"

WHEREVER there is desperately rough work for timber to do, wherever there is a vast burden to be borne with dogged patience, wherever strain presses through a critical moment and goes past to return again, wherever the insidious onslaughts of marine-borers and white ants are to be resisted, wherever the sun warps and water rots, wherever skeptical engineers demand surely dependable service in sand, and swamp, and harbor water, through long periods, there is a great cry for Australian jarrah and karri. Vast and raw as Australia is—its wooded ranges wide-spread and new to the ax, its bush rich and singular with sandalwood, rosewood, red bean, blackbutt, stringy-bark, tulipwood, satin box, silky oak, tallowwood, gum, ironbark, and pine, it is with the arid interior wastes to account for a most meagerly forested land. An area of three million miles; a forest area of one hundred and sixty thousand miles. Algeria is not one-half more impoverished in proportion. In the rolling, copiously watered country of the Australian southwest, however, into which the settlers are now penetrating, felling and plowing and planting as they advance, the forests are abundant with karri and jarrah, a

AUSTRALIA'S WOODED RANGES ARE NEW TO THE AX

great seacoast patch of the one, a wide, rich strip of the other. And these are timbers of consequence—sturdy, shaggy, gray-trunked old eucalypts, blood-red when sawn, heavier than water, tough in the grain, elastic and enduring.

We were landed deep in the bush, near dusk, from a preposterously diminutive coach, no larger than a stage-coach of the early days, appended as an afterthought to a jaunty little logging-train, which had tooted and squeaked and rather dreadfully plunged all this way as if on an hilarious wager to go as fast as it bally well pleased, clear through to the end of the road without once jumping the rails or damaging more than the composure of the passengers—alighting with three others, who tumbled out of third class, much to our surprise, with luggage enough, it seemed to the eye, to make a tidy fit for that small compartment of its own shabby bulk: a long man in rusty black, with melancholy eyes, blue cheeks, and a bottle nose, in company with a stout, bleached lady, peevishly managing a scrawny little girl with limp, flaxen hair, a spoiled and petulant child. We could by no means fathom the business of these singular persons. They had the look of old-fashioned strolling players. The man was a dank and grotesquely dignified personage of the old school of strollers, as our fancy has been taught to picture those characters, and the child was pitifully lean and pallid. A troop of fine brown children followed them off—all the while bashfully eying the pallid little girl.

Here, remote from all towns and farms, was a community of jarrah cottages, weathered gray, hud-

dled in a deep hollow by the mill, surrounded by a lusty bush which persistently encroached, like a rebellious jungle, for ever threatening to overrun and repossess the clearing on the sly, and must periodically be slashed back to its own quarters. It was a haphazard arrangement of little cottages, vine-clad and flowering, with winding lanes between, the whole inclosing a dry, irregular common, which they used for half-holiday cricket, some such provision being happily essential to the life of every community in Australia. And every cozy cottage of them all, we were amused to observe, was furnished with a monstrous wooden chimney, which had either been afire, being charred and eaten through, or was waiting to catch afire, to gratify a mischievous ambition, and was only deterred from doing so the very next instant by the presence near by of a long ladder and a bucket of water. Having supped with satisfaction at the boarding-house—a private parlor, even here, to be sure, in the English way, for guests of our obvious quality—we walked out into the moonlight and found our hands gripped and painfully wrung before they were fairly out of our pockets.

The author of this hospitable onslaught was a rosy young man in a bowler and decent tweed, now all out of breath with haste and lively emotion.

"'Twas your name that drew me to you," he gasped. "Man, man," he declared, deeply affected, "'tis a grand Scotch name! What part are you from?"

I confessed to a Canadian origin.

"*Colonial* Scotch!" said the young dog, disgusted. "Ah, well," more heartily, "you can't help it. I'm

from Dumfriesshire myself. Was you expecting me?"

We had not been led to look for him.

"I'm thinking," said he, blankly, "that you've never heard of me."

"Well, you see—" we began.

"Losh! that's strange," he broke in, brooding.

With this we agreed.

"Did you not know I was here?" cried he, then, amazed. "Did nobody tell you? Man," says he, "that's incredible! Do you not know who I am?"

"Ah yes," said I, confidently; "you're the minister."

"Losh! that's stupid," says he. "Where's my white tie? Man, I'm the Scotch schoolmaster!"

We could not ease his pride; nor could we raise his spirits, which had fallen heavily; he was humiliated and homesick—wretchedly humiliated. We praised his temerity in venturing so far from home in pursuit of a future of consequence; we praised his employment—his prospects, too; and with every word of all this heartening approbation, seeming first to weigh it delicately, to discover its reasonableness, as a serious young man should lest he be misled by flattery, he agreed in short nods of the head, as though he had long ago reached these inspiring conclusions for himself, and was not to be surprised by anything of the sort. But he was no comforted. He had been for three months in the colonies—and was not yet conspicuous! Where was his energy to advance himself? What had overtaken his visions? For a time he ran on, his most inconsequential sentences wearing an air of desperate importance, in praise of bush life and the

Australian opportunity—opportunity, he was careful to append, with emphasis, for young men of parts; but by and by, his mood gone dry of cheerfulness, he rose abruptly to take his leave. This he accomplished in the most gloomy fashion: he shook our hands, with much modified warmth, expressed his delight with our acquaintance, with an elderly air of indulgence, and moved solemnly down the path, head bent, pausing to brood at the gate, however, through a melodramatic interval which kept us expectantly waiting.

All at once he stiffened and flashed about on us with some show of passion.

"There's many a Scotch schoolmaster risen to fame from more unlikely places," said he, grimly. "You'll hear tell of me yet."

He stalked off.

Upon the surprise occasioned by the Scotch schoolmaster's ecstatic propheey came the loud, tumultuous clang of a bell. It was no grave call to worship. No fear! It was a wild alarm—an agitated, urgent summons, flung far and wide over village and bush in appeal to all true men. There was warning in it. There was fright in it. It split the still night in a way to make one's heart jump and pound. It roused to action. Fire!—it could mean nothing less. Making what haste we could over the unfamiliar paths in the direction of the frantic clamor, stumbling and panting, we came breathless to the churchyard by the moonlit common; and there—clinging like a monkey to the top of a tall pole (which he had shinned)—we found a very small boy beating the great bell with the clapper by means of a short rope.

Such was his energy, so precarious was his situation, such a mighty tumult was he raising, that we could not ask him what threatened; but we were almost immediately enlightened in another way: a second very small boy, ringing a hand-bell with all his feverish strength, came tumbling across the common at the top of his speed.

"Show's in town!" he bawled as he ran.

"What show? Where?"

"Melbourne Comedy Three! Town Hall to-night!"

And show there was, which promised beforehand, in the bold type of the handbills, to tickle the risibilities, to draw tears, to arouse roars of laughter, all without in the least degree offending the most delicate sensibilities—a refined comedy-concert, in short, performed behind kerosene footlights by the melancholy man in rusty black and the bleached lady and the scrawny little girl with the limp, flaxen hair. But the long man in black, though seeming longer and leaner than ever, was no longer melancholy, nor was he in black, fresh or rusty; and the little girl was no longer petulant, nor was she pallid, but rosy and smiling, and as for her limp, flaxen hair, it was cunningly become a tangle of dear, roguish curls. And the titters and tears and guffaws came from an audience self-respectingly clad in its best: ladies in pretty white gowns and gloves, sun-browned little girls in starched dresses, little boys in tweed and Eton collars (hands washed and hair plastered flat), and men with their workaday dungaree exchanged for respectable Sabbath habiliments—an astonishingly agreeable and polite and happy and prosperous company, altogether of a quality rare to see.

And when the last tear was dried, when the last roar of laughter had subsided, the floor was cleared, as by a whirlwind kept in waiting, and there was a jolly, decent dance, tripped by young and old, all flushed and joyous, to the good music of an aspiring village orchestra.

VII

A BILLY OF TEA

BEFORE dawn of the next day, being then bound to the works, twenty miles deeper into the bush, our teeth chattering more wilfully than they had ever chattered before, we were crouched aboard a flat-car, wretched and near numb with cold, yet moved to be alert in a shower of sparks from a devil-may-care little locomotive, which ate jarrah-wood for breakfast and breathed black smoke and flaming cinders in fine disregard of the consequences to the dry midsummer bush through which it went roaring. That we were not consumed was due to the cunning with which we sniffed and kept watch, and the agility and determination with which we extinguished one another; and that we did not leave the rich forest ablaze in a hundred likely places in our wake was one of the most incredible experiences of our Australian journey. The valleys were still deep with night and clammy mist; but the ridges, high and shaggy, were beginning to glow, and through the gnarled trees which crested them the new day dropped shafts of gray light into the somber shadows below—like the glory of heaven, streaming into the dark and terrible places of the world, in the old engravings called "The Voyage of Life."

An outlandish gray shape shot through a patch of light; and lesser gray shapes, leaping from shadow to shadow.

"Kangaroo?"

"The first was a boomer—a big fellow. You'll see a dozen more"—which turned out to be true.

A group of tents, pitched for shade, and open stables, mere paddocks, was camp enough for this benevolent climate. There were no low log cabins banked and calked against cold weather, as in the American woods; and the camp differed more conspicuously still in this, that the lumberjacks kept their wives and children with them, a school being provided even here for the brown little "scrubbers" by a solicitous government. The horses were moving out in a cloud of sunlit dust; and there were children about, in easy rags, and industrious poultry, scratching for their chicks, and a cloud and very plague of house-flies, and many great, lean kangaroo dogs. Beyond all this, in an open, ragged old bush, with dust and harsh grasses underfoot, with parrots and cockatoos screaming and squawking in the branches, and flitting brilliantly, too, through the blue sunlight, the sawyers and teamsters were at work, felling, hauling, loading, the heavy operation proceeding, now that the morning was well advanced, in a heat of one hundred and one degrees in the shade, yet drawing hardly more than a dew of perspiration from these seasoned laborers, as we whom the sun was bitterly punishing could hardly credit.

"Snakes hereabouts?" I chanced to inquire.

"Thaousands," said the sawyer.

"Deadly?"

THE NOON-DAY REST

"They tell me, and I believe it," he replied, weighing his words, "that the death-adder and tiger-snake kill in half an hour. I'm told," he drawled on, in harmony with the droning weather, "that a dog won't last no more than twenty minutes. The death-adder, now, he's a slow, stupid beast, and won't move along. The tiger-snake comes at you; but the death-adder, he's a slow, stupid beast—lies still and bites when you tread on him. There's the black snake, too, and the brown snake—they're deadly; and a few others, like the tree snakes, and maybe some more."

"Mortality high?"

"What say? Oh! Well, I'll tell you, if you go hunting for snakes you're likely to be kept real busy; but if you mind your own business, and give the snakes a chance to mind their own business, and if you look out for them slow, stupid death-adders, you're likely to be let off. I heard tell of a kiddie being bit once. He put his hand in a rabbit-hole."

"Did the child die?"

"Ah, well, no; he took an anecdote."

It had been a mild abrasion: for these snakes—the black snake and tiger-snake and death-adder in particular—are more virulently poisonous than the rattlesnake or cobra. Yet death from snake-bite is by no means common in Australia.

To this pleasant, drowsy old bush—with its droning and sunshine and deep shade of jarrah and black-butt and she-oak, its swift, flashing color, its sleepy twitter and shrewish screaming—a host of fantastic grass-trees, everywhere lurking, gave a highly hu-

morous aspect. Blackboys, they were colloquially called; and truly they were comical fellows, distinguishing the Australian bush with the astonished laughter they could not fail to stimulate. They were thick as a man, tall as a boy or a man, naked as a cannibal, all growing in the infinitely diverse attitudes of men; and from the heads of the bare, black trunks, completing and pointing the remarkable resemblance, sprang thick tufts of grass, like the wild hair of savages, from which a long spike protruded in precise suggestion of a half-concealed spear. It seemed, too, that every shock-headed blackboy of the bush, in a paralysis of rage, suspicion, or amazement, was staring at us who traversed it: dwarf blackboys, absurdly corpulent blackboys, lean blackboys, giant blackboys, decrepit blackboys, blackboys pompous and timid and pious; toddlers, and saucy youngsters, and terrible warriors: peering with hostile intent, hiding behind trees, doubled up in some agony of horror, stooping to escape observation, heads thrown back in arrested convulsions of merriment--a human variety of emotion and behavior in the emergency of our invasion of their secluded country.

"There," the Artist declared, pointing in horror, "are two disgracefully drunken blackboys!"

It was sadly true: those shameless blackboys had their long-haired heads close together, in the manner of young college men musically celebrating a victory in the privacy of some great city; and all their joints were loose, and their hair was fallen over their eyes, and their legs were conspicuously weak, and they were all too plainly deriving much-needed support the one from the other.

A BILLY OF TEA

At noon we rested and refreshed ourselves from a billy of tea with the crew in the shade of a great blackbutt by the landing. They were British or Australian born, every jack of them; there was not an Italian in the company, not even a Swede. The Australian immigration is British—the Australian population ninety-six per cent. British or Australian born, or of one descent or the other. Though the peasant of southern Europe is warmly encouraged to adventure upon the land, he is regarded with that wary suspicion which attaches to dark strangers and is by no means indulged in the questionable practices of his own land. "We'll teach *you*," said the Perth magistrate, passing merciless sentence upon an Italian who had lightly employed a stiletto in some small altercation with a countryman, "that you're in *our* country now!" These men with whom we rested were like lumberjacks the world over—physically fine, heart fellows, but hard rogues and wastrels. Their diversion was a furious debauch, from which, having "knocked down" their checks in the first public-house, they crawled back to long periods of healthful labor.

It being now shortly after Christmas, the talk had something to do with the long Christmas absence.

"Fined me a pound in Jarrahdale," said Scotty.

"A pound for bein' *drunk!*" cried the hook-man, indignantly.

"Ah, well," said Scotty, in honorable defense of the magistrate, "I was usin' profane langwitch."

"Dod-blime me!" the hook-man protested, "they only charge ten bob for that in Perth!"

"Ah, well," said Scotty, "I got my money's worth!"

In these simple surroundings Scotty kept us all laughing; he was the wit, and himself laughed harder than any. Once, said he, a new chum came to the jarrah bush. A new chum is a tenderfoot, specifically an English tenderfoot; he is, of course, the butt of every bush and mining camp in Australia. And this new chum, disgruntled and blistered and homesick, fancied, said Scotty, that it would be more agreeable to pick up a fortune in Perth than to hew it from the bush. Forthwith he rolled his swag and prepared to return. It was not far to the railroad; a half-mile of hilly country—perhaps a bush mile. But in very natural alarm of being bushed the new chum sought out Scotty for precise directions. Precise directions Scotty cheerfully afforded, cross-country directions, more than ample for any bushman, but not at all to the liking of the new chum, whom the bush never failed to bewilder. Casting about for an unmistakable landmark—a landmark so placed and obvious that even a new chum could not fail to recognize and remember it—Scotty's eye fell by happy chance on a cow, placidly chewing her cud on the crest of a ridge in the right direction.

"See that cow?" says Scotty.

"I do," says the new chum, positively.

"Go to that cow," says Scotty. "When you come to that cow, turn to the right. You can't miss the road; it's within fifty yards of that cow."

"I go to the cow," the new chum repeated, providing against the chance of error, "and turn to the right?"

"Right-o!" says Scotty. "Good luck!"

That night Scotty was astounded to find the new chum once more in the jarrah camp.

"Why, what's up with you?" says he.
"Bad directions."
"Did you go to the cow and turn to the right?"
"I couldn't catch up with the cow!"

Kangaroo are hereabouts hunted for sport—for the hide, too, and for the somewhat unsavory delicacy of the tail, boiled in a pot to make soup and a jelly. It is not an heroic sport. It is exhilarating, perhaps—a gallop through the bush, taking the windfalls in full career, on the heels of a pack of kangaroo dogs, swift as greyhounds, powerful and ferocious as bloodhounds; and the kill—the quarry being a "boomer," a savage and desperate "old-man" kangaroo—provides the dogs with some entertaining moments. A kangaroo takes instinctively to water, where, at bay in depth enough, he drowns a dog in short order. At bay in the bush, upright on one hind-leg and the thick curve of his tail, his back against a tree, he is at a disadvantage. But he is not defenseless. The long hoof of his free hind-leg is his weapon; and with this—having by good fortune trapped an unwary antagonist to his breast with his sharp-clawed fore-legs—he deals a terrible fashion of death. In flight, however, a kangaroo is easy prey: a knowing dog catches him by the tail, overturns him with a cunning wrench, and takes his throat from a safe angle before he can recover.

Notwithstanding the kangaroo's popular reputation for speed, he is easily overtaken in the bush by a good horse (they say) within half a mile. A capable kangaroo dog—a lean, swift beast, a cross between a greyhound and a mastiff, bred to course and kill—soon runs him to bay. Without dogs it is the

custom to kill with a cudgel. This is often accomplished by the sportsman from the back of his horse. Dismounted, however, with the kangaroo waiting alertly for attack, it is sometimes a perilous venture to come to close quarters. A slip—and the sportsman finds himself all at once in a desperate situation. One of the lumberjacks with whom we rested in the shade of the blackbutt showed us the scars of an encounter. He had ridden the kangaroo down, said he; and, being in haste to make an end of the sport, he had caught up the first likely stick his eye could discover, and he had stepped quickly and confidently in, and he had struck hard and accurately. And the next instant, caught off the ground, he was struggling breast to breast, in the hug of the creature, frightfully aware that he must escape before the deadly hind-foot had devastated him.

"My club broke," he explained, "and the boomer got me."

There were long scars on his back and shoulders, the which we were not very sorry to see, for we could not make out why any man should wish to kill a kangaroo for sport.

VIII

THE ROMANCE OF OL' DAN DOUGHERTY

OF all the broken gentlemen that ever I met in my travels, of all the scamps and queer fish and gray reprobates, Dan Dougherty of the jarrah bush was the most bewildering and most poignantly appealing. He was a stableman, a stocky, grim, gray old fellow, clad like any bushman, in dungaree and wool—an old fellow of eccentric habit, which sprang, after all, for all I know, rather from a high and reasonable determination than a churlish disposition or any departure from good health. Whether Dan Dougherty was rake or hero, rogue or gentleman, no man could tell. He had no intimates; he would not so much as give a mate a nod or good-day, but lived the years through in a silence of his own making, a recluse in his bachelor tent by a she-oak near the stables. He had never battled, they said, for indulgence. Yet his humor was not molested: for old Dan Dougherty had a clear, superior eye; and so well could he manage his glance, which struck, glittering cold and sharp as a blade, from behind brows so shaggy that he must clip them, and so straight and haughty was he, and so still and tense with menace, that the bullies and wits of the bush had never challenged his power to damage them.

And there was more—an uncanny thing; and by this Dan Dougherty's bushmates were thrilled to the marrow while they lay listening and peering and shivering in the darkness by Dan Dougherty's tent. Upon occasion Dan Dougherty would sweep his quarters and put his dooryard in order; and having disposed of the horses, which came in from the bush, limp with labor, in a cloud of yellow dust, he would cleanse and comb himself and dress up in his best, taking vast pains to accomplish a good appearance, as if in solicitous expectation of company. But no visitor had ever come—no visitor at all—no visitor in the flesh. Yet upon every occasion Dan Dougherty would clear his table, set out a candle, a bottle and two glasses, and place two chairs; and, having surveyed his quarters in search of some disorder (which he never could find), he would sit himself down to brood away the interval of waiting for his strange guest. But not for long. Presently he would start, as if there had come a knock; and he would listen, jump to his feet, sure, now, that there had come a knock indeed, and make haste to throw back the flap and peer out in welcome. There was never anybody to welcome—never a soul in the darkness.

Yet Dan Dougherty would behave precisely as though an old friend had dropped in for a gossip.

"Good evenin', Mister Dougherty!"

"Good evenin', Dan!"

"I hope I see you well, Mister Dougherty!"

"You do that, Dan. Bless God, I'm prime!"

This hearty dialogue was all the doing of Dan Dougherty. In the person of Mister Dougherty (the visitor) his voice was rounded and agreeably haughty

—a touch of condescension; and in the person of old Dan Dougherty it was decently humble, in the way of a self-respecting inferior addressing a natural and kindly superior.

"Will you come in, Mister Dougherty?"

"I will, Dan; I will that. You're good company, Dan, my boy."

"True for you, Mister Dougherty. I'm damned good company."

"You always was, Dan."

"Ah, well, Mister Dougherty, I've had all these years in the bush to make sure of it."

Then proceeding to the table, Dan Dougherty would with a pretty show of hospitality draw the chair for his ghostly visitor and himself be seated opposite.

"Will you have a glass of stout, Mister Dougherty?"

"I will, Dan—and thank you."

Very gravely Dan Dougherty would pour the two glasses full.

"Your health, Mister Dougherty!"

"Your health, Dan!"

Whereupon Dan Dougherty would drink off both glasses and resume the conversation. It seemed always to be an impersonal exchange. The listeners learned nothing. Mister Dougherty talked with dignity and reserve. Dan Dougherty matched him in both. They appeared to be a companionable pair; there was no quarrel recorded; but there was this mystery about it: that they talked as two friendly souls might talk who were both sadly aware of the disgrace of the one, but determined to preserve an ancient friendship at any cost—confining themselves

to innocent topics and taking such poor solace as they could in mere proximity. "Your health, Mister Dougherty!" "Your health, Dan!" But the proceeding was usually temperate enough. It might be that a second bottle was opened. It might be that even a third cork would pop. And it might be—the occasions being rare—that in quaffing for both Dan Dougherty would drink too much for his composure. At such times he would fall into a state of abject melancholy, his arms straight out on the table, his face buried between them, but not before there had been a last mysterious exchange between the wraith and himself, taking invariably the one form.

"And have you had letters from home, Dan?"

"I have not, Mister Dougherty."

"Ah, well, Dan, you'll be takin' a run over to the old country soon, no doubt?"

"I'm never goin' home at all, Mister Dougherty, God help me! The old country's well rid of me and the bush is no worse of my company!"

It was late when we were landed once more in the little hollow by the mill. There was an amazing sunset. For a space we stood stock-still and astounded. Dusk was near come. In the deeper places of the hollow it was already dark. The perpetual fires of red jarrah waste smoldered there, a living scarlet, and burst, intermittently, into vermilion flame, by which the slow, thick smoke was changed to rolling crimson clouds. And high past the deep color of these fires—beyond the black shadows—glowed the weird sunset light. Once on the north Atlantic coast a change of the wind suddenly

interposed a cloud of fog between our small craft and the flaring western sky; and every drop of this thin mist, catching its measure of crimson color, shone like the dust of rubies; so that with red hands we sailed a red craft in a world of red cloud and water. But here was a green sunset: a flat, green sky, all aglow—the light of emerald fires beyond the shaggy black trees on the crest of the hill; and our world was a world of shadows and red fires and the failing glow of green.

IX

COOLGARDIE FORSAKEN

SOME all too optimistic Australians from Sydney Side, who have never traveled the bitter goldfields country of Western Australia, say of all the farther reaches of that vast waste—declare, indeed, with a smack of the lips, an ingenuous design to astound: "D'ye know, they tell *me* that the old explorers were mistaken?—that the country out there is first-class pastoral land?" The old explorers had reported deserts to lie thereabouts. They had thirsted, they had hungered, they had gasped a course of many perilous months, reaching at last an emaciated, leathery, half-mad return. Sydney Side Australians of the unknowing and sanguine type have no more definite knowledge of the aspects of their own far west than the Europe-going New-Englander who has never been west of Niagara Falls knows of the intimacies of existence and landscape in uttermost Arizona. The low comedian of Her Majesty's Theater at Melbourne, lugubriously describing his own inheritance, hit the nail on the head and almost drove it home. Said he: "Some of it's arable—most of it's 'orrible!" He missed the truth by this much: that none of it appears to the transient observer at this present to be highly arable.

COOLGARDIE FORSAKEN

Generally speaking, the gold-fields country, of which the Golden Mile is the source of life, is in summer a red desert place, week after week blistering under a brazen sun, swept by whirling dust-winds, hot sometimes to the degree of more than one hundred and twenty in the shade, so dry that the water for its sufficient refreshment must be pumped three hundred and fifty miles from the great weir at Mundaring: yet to the edge of the salt lakes it is vividly green, in stretches, with an open growth of salmon-gum and needle-wood and gimlet trees and broom-bush—a mirage of fertility, lying in the distance, but disclosing, every step of the way, its false and arid character. They say the land flourishes after rain; and no doubt the grasses do spring green and succulent, since it seems no length of drought can kill them utterly in Australia—but the rains are shy and niggardly.

A chance remark in passing to a desiccated native with agricultural aspirations:

"Dry country you got here."

"Ah, well," he explained, "you see, this is an exceptionally dry season."

"How long is it," the curious traveler inquired, looking around about upon the scorched world, "since you had anything *but* an exceptionally dry season?"

"Ah, well—about sixteen year!"

Having returned from the jarrah bush to Perth, we set out, presently, for the gold-fields country, which lies a night's journey to the east. Late in the afternoon of a hot, dry day—the thermometer declaring a temperature of one hundred and ten in the

shade at sea-level, as though it were quite used to the feat—the Gold-fields Express screeched out of the station, rattled importantly through the yards, and puffed off and away from the bustle and broiling asphalt streets of Perth on the four-hundred-mile run northeast to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. It was a slovenly little train—a diminutive English contraption, gone shabby with hard service, filled to the doors with a free-and-easy western company, in khaki and leather, in tweeds, in black coats, in woolen shirts and broad-brimmed felt hats—a company tanned and hairy and adorned with diamonds and virgin nuggets. Presently, in the light of a great red sunset, it was swaying recklessly through raw, rolling eucalyptus country, which the pioneers were stripping to expose the fertile soil, and on into the dark of a murky night. A thirsty journey, for the relief of which water was provided in the Australian way—long canvas sacks of water, with wooden spigots, suspended on the platforms, dripping from every pore to cool the contents by evaporation. It was desperately hot weather, and by this time incredibly dry. A hot wind, blowing from the central deserts, rioting in at the open windows, came with clouds of gritty dust, which it deposited in inch-deep drifts in the corridors and shabby compartments. In this parching heat and dust, when the night had fallen deep, men wandered about in pajamas, women in desperate dishabille, whimpering children in their scanty night-clothes; and in the little dining-car, where they sat late over cards and drink—jammed with prospectors, miners, immigrants, engineers, commercial travelers, and the worn-out women and children of the drylands be-

SOME SET OUT WITH WHEELBARROWS—A HUNDRED MILES TO COOLGARDIE

yond—the bar was rushed by a clamoring crowd from the coaches in the rear.

"She humps along," an old prospector remarked, in hearty satisfaction with his state's achievement in the matter of long-distance railroad travel. "Not *too* bad, eh?"

I laughed a little.

"Ah, well," said he, laughing, too; "you're a bit unfair, aren't you? We've altogether different standards. You're thinking of transcontinental limiteds and a hundred million people; and I'm thinking of the early days in a God-forsaken gold country—'way back in 'ninety-two, when Bagley rode into Southern Cross from the desert at Coolgardie, like a madman, with two thousand pounds in nuggets and dust, picked up in two days." And having described the first fever and stampede of those wild times, he went on, seeming to recall it all as a man remembers the amazing incidents of a village fire: "In two hours horses went from a couple of pounds a head to fifty pounds a head. Camels?—you couldn't buy 'em at all. Dogs, cows—anything that could haul; bicycles—anything a man could ride; buggies and butchers' carts—anything on wheels: in a day or two Southern Cross was cleaned out. Before I managed to get away I saw a husky young chap take the Coolgardie trail with his outfit packed in his little boy's express-cart. I saw a dozen fellows set out with wheelbarrows. I saw an old bloke push off with a baby-carriage. I saw some chaps get away with barrels—a sort of axle through the center, the man between the shafts, the outfit stowed away somehow inside. It was something like one hundred and twenty-five miles from Southern

Cross to the old Coolgardie field, I reckon—sand and scrub and stony ground, dry country; and at first nobody knew the water-soaks. We footed every mile of it in the early days with our tongues swollen and our lips black—in a week, two weeks, three weeks. Thirst? My word! And that's why it occurred to me that this little Gold-fields Express was humpin' along."

"Of course, now—"

"Oh, *now*," the prospector interrupted, contemptuously, "all a man has to do is to *wake up* in Coolgardie."

"And—"

"Water? Why, young fellow," he swore, his eyes twinkling, "they *waste* it! *They bathe in it*—a shilling a go at Kalgoorlie!"

We swayed along—bumping, jerking, squeaking, rattling. It seemed the capable and ambitious little train would jump the track in a devoted endeavor to accomplish its distance in the time allotted. These were exhausting hours: the hot wind, the clatter of our progress, the dust, the close contact with all those abandoned others in the same misfortune. Occasionally we stopped at some woebegone wayside place; and these pauses were so ample in the measure of them, and so grateful in opportunity, that the horde of passengers alighted, in whatsoever sort of night attire they affected, if that chanced to be their condition, to take the air on the platform until a hand-bell clanged and the guard shouted, "Seats, if you please, gentlemen!" and a whistle shrilled like a boatswain's pipe, and the locomotive shrieked a last warning to be aboard at once or be left to make the best of that gloom and desolation

for the night. It was a task to go the length of the tumultuous little train—to avoid treading on the fevered children, to escape surprising the women in the relaxation of undress, to keep from being shot from one side of the corridor to the other, and eventually into the corpulency of some pajama-clad gentleman returning from the flowing bar with a bottle of beer in each hand. And thereafter there was a long, black night, spent in a storm of dust and cinders—and then the immensity of the dawn, so red and bold that the window was a lurid square, solid with color, with the whole outdoor world a thick, awesome glow of brightening glory—and then the yellow blaze of the gold-fields waste of green scrub and red earth—and at last the wide, vacant streets of Kalgoorlie, prostrate and blind and ghastly white in the dreadful mid-morning sunlight.

Ballarat and Bendigo—all the celebrated fields of Victoria and New South Wales—saw their seething prosperity in the failing years of the California scramble and tumult. Their fortunes and crimes, their bushrangers and gentlemen-diggers and ticket-of-leave men, had become the texture of old men's tales before, in the unexplored tropical north of West Australia, six thousand miles away as the crow flies, the first discovery of gold precipitated the rush to Kimberley. Kimberley was a failure; men languished on the scorched, bewildering trail, died of fever and disillusionment on the fields, perished of hunger and thirst and uttermost exhaustion on the dispirited way back. But presently there were mild discoveries to the south—taunting promises of the greater thing; and some ten years later Bagley

stumbled on the riches of a fairy tale in a dry desolation called by the aboriginals Coolgardie. Coolgardie was overrun by a wild motley from the several Australian colonies and the far four quarters of the earth. Within the year Pat Hannan scratched the earth at Kalgoorlie and disclosed in one delirious day square miles of wealth in alluvial gold. Dreams came true—the maddest visions of the leanest old graybeard who had prospected that parched and fiery waste through years of dogged expectation. Came, then, the rush to Siberia—to Bulong and White Feather and Black Flag and Broad Arrow. A nugget of four hundred and sixty-three ounces was unearthed; and subsequently the Bobby Dazzler—four hundred and eighty-seven yellow ounces in a lump—enriched a digger of Shark's Gully. Capital came leaping in to absorb the reefs: there was buying and selling; there were syndicates, certificates of stock, a market for shares; there was sudden fortune, ruination overnight, merry flitting to London, suicide, building of churches and schools, delirium tremens.

Private organization now gravely presides over these resources; but a little spark of news, drifting in with the hot wind from beyond the salt lakes to touch the enduring hope, would still explode a loud and blazing rush to the farthest deserts. "The gold was here," they reason. "Why *only* here? It's a big country. There are hundreds of thousands of square miles to explore and prospect. There'll be a new Coolgardie some day, no fear—another Kalgoorlie!" And so still they go about with an ear open to faint sounds, with an eye peeled to descry mysterious doings and departures, with lips occupied

ONCE THE STREETS WERE FILLED WITH SWAGGER AND RIOT

with low whispers out of hearing, with a persistently inquisitive attitude toward strangers. But old Coolgardie—where once the streets were filled with swagger and prodigal riot, where fortunes slipped through the claws of old men gone imbecile with good luck and vanished overnight from the blistered hands of young wastrels, where once the homeliest barmaid washed her hair with champagne—is now by contrast deserted and destitute. In its heyday of a few whirling years and through the times of its quick degeneration the Coolgardie field produced nearly six million pounds in new gold. Yet not long ago, at three o'clock of a midsummer afternoon, I waited, watch in hand, in the main street of the town, for some sign of life—some companionable sound or movement; and for more than seven minutes, until a child whimpered distress in the heat near by, I stared at a row of vacant shops, at drifting dust-clouds, at the burnished prospect beyond, and at the open doors of eleven public-house bars, six on one side of the street and five on the other. The public-houses implied inhabitants; and a shriveled poster, in a shop window, announcing the appearance of Bob Harper's Physical Culture Girls at Royal Hall, implied a place of amusement and a population desperately eager for distraction.

Midway between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie there is a gathering of shanties. It is called Kurrawang.

"What do the people do here?" I inquired of a native.

"Oh," said he, "several things."

"No doubt," I persisted; "but *what?*"

"Damned if I know," he confessed. "I never inquired."

X

NEIGHBORS OF THE GOLDEN MILE

KALGOORLIE and Boulder, considerable cities which adjoin near where Pat Hannan scratched out his nuggets in the early days, are noisy with life and ambition; and as long as the Golden Mile flourishes to sustain them they will continue to thrive and aspire in spite of the immensity and horrible character of the desert land which isolates them from rivers and fertile places and the bounty of a kindly soil. They run with the times: they provide themselves with comforts; they amuse themselves; they are adorned; they regard their duty to the state and consider the future of their children's children. The Golden Mile lies within sight of Hannan's old claim —the smoke and dust and black superstructures of a thin line of deep and vastly rich mines. One of the group—not the pride of them all—must produce £600 a day to keep the stockholders in good humor with its behavior; and the affection of the directors would be largely increased—it was intimated—if a responsive good conduct should increase even this gratifying yield to £1,000 a day. Roughly speaking, the Golden Mile and its lesser neighbors of Kalgoorlie - the big shows, as distinguished from the individual enterprises scattered broadcast over the country,

which are called little shows—employ five thousand men and produce £3,000,000 a year; and the whole field in which the Golden Mile is situated has from the first days of the Kalgoorlie rush, twenty years ago, produced almost £56,000,000, which, stated more impressively in dollars, amounts to two hundred and eighty millions. It was pointed out by a furious young member of the Labor party of Western Australia that the wealth taken from these few miles of wilderness which once were public domain equaled nearly £600 per capita of the maximum population of the district.

And consequently—

"Who gets it all?" he demanded.

I could not enlighten him.

"Stockholders in London," he snapped, "who never saw the gold-fields!"

This sort of thing concerns them feverishly in Australia—not by any means generally in a fashion so raw.

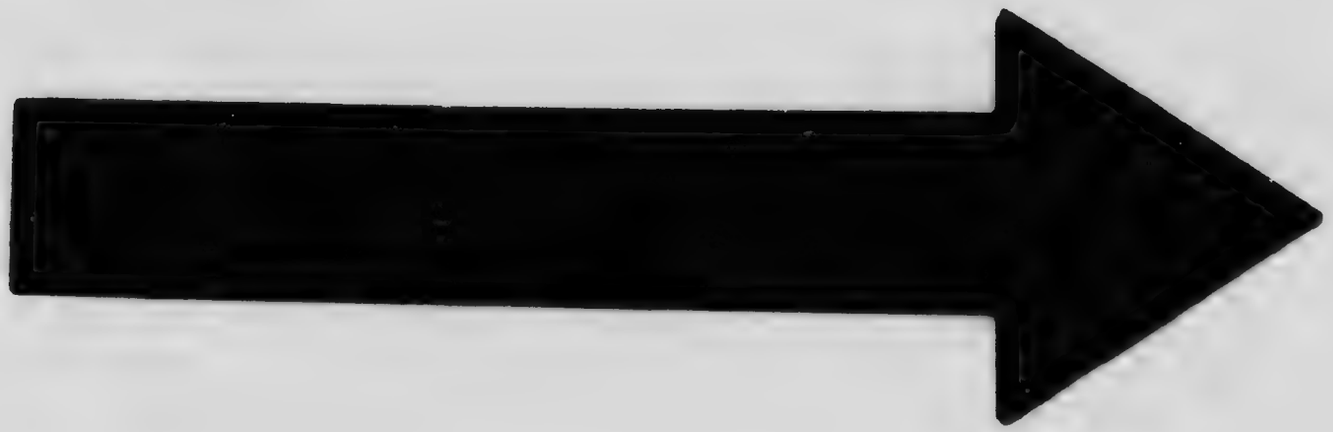
Quite aside from the marvel of all this wealth and the achievement of winning it by means of those astonishing modern processes which are the pretty boast of the state, a community of old men, neighbors of the Golden Mile, stationary near by in a murky backwater of the gold-seeking stream, provides a spectacle of peculiar pathos and presently becomes a poignant stimulus to reflection. Within hundreds of desiccated miles of the old alluvial fields there was no flowing water. Gold was dry-blown in the times of the great rush. That is to say: they spaded the soil from shallow trenches; they sifted it hurriedly for the larger specimens; they threw

the residue into the wind; they deftly caught it again in iron dishes; once more and yet again and again they tossed it up to cleanse it of the lighter waste; and at last they clawed it over for little nuggets and specks. In the roaring early days a cloud of red dust hid the crowded and feverish activities of the camps. New-comers could see it rising from the desert like some poisonous smoke; and approaching —they relate—they could hear from the misty depths of it the astounding roar of the gravel in the pans and the laughter and disputation of the day's frantic work. They remember the cloud well enough—the hell-cloud (as they say)—and the incredibly thirsty and blinding quality of it; but the great commotion of the gravel raining in uninterrupted downpour into thousands of iron pans, sounding in torrential volume from the dust and howling pit which hid its character, so bewildered them that, looking back from these days of drear quiet, they are at a loss to describe its singularly disquieting effect.

The first adventurers—an amazing company of broken gentlemen, of younger sons and thieves and red old prospectors and honest fellows of every degree, mixed from the slums and gloomy offices of British cities, from the English colleges and staid countrysides, from the American West and the northern wastes and the old diggings of Victoria and New South Wales—pawed out the obvious gold in haste and returned to their previous occupations or departed with their parasites of the bars and dance-halls in a new delirium to the virgin fields of South Africa and Alaska. They had come in a vast, tumultuous horde, to win or waste; and off they

stampeded to new worlds, the boldest of them, when the news of richer places came shouting over the desert from the sea—jumped from the January heat and blistering light of the Coolgardie drylands to the January cold and long night of the Yukon. Presently all that was left behind was the human wreckage of the camps—men held prisoners by age and ill health and empty pockets and the atrophy of courage to adventure any more. These stolidly remained in the last fields they might ever search—never advancing beyond the old customs, hardly altering the old, serviceable costume, living to themselves, "batching it" in precisely the old circumstances of gold-fields existence, apart from the generation and cut off from the new thrift and prosy method of the times, doubtless dwelling with glorified memories of old events and the ghosts of old companions; and there to this day, a dwindling community, neighbors of the opulent Golden Mile, forgotten, they continue to exhaust their days.

In these lean years—*in the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened . . . or ever the silver cord be loosed or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern*—in these lean years the old codgers must burrow deeper than their fellows burrowed in the prodigal days of twenty years ago, and must sift again and again the impoverished tailings of the forsaken camps, watching with glazed and blistered eyes for the yellow glitter in the bottom of the pans, more alertly, now, in their age and need. Nobody knows them; they have no habi-



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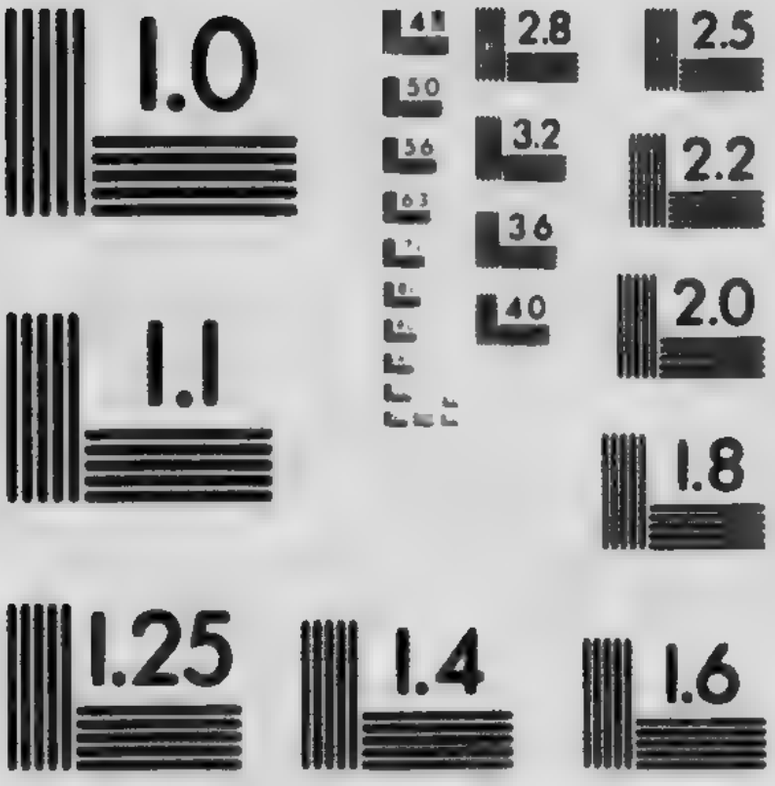

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tations except disjointed and grotesque contraptions of corrugated iron and rotting canvas; they have no kin except the faces that people visions; they have no attachments of friendship except among themselves; they have no names known generally even to one another except the crisp sobriquets of the old camps. By day, on the edge of town, isolated little puffs of dust drift off from their labor with the hot wind and declare their trembling activity; and by night, where once in the flare of the diggings the world swarmed with noisy mates, their meager camp-fires—points of light in the shadows of the wide, abandoned fields—illumine a background of some fantastic shanty and disclose the last gatherings of these gray wraiths and rapscallions yarning heartily together like the veterans of some old war.

No odds are asked of life. These neighbors cherish a ragged independence. Cheery old fellows, diggers of the old school, they followed their will to this place and extremity and they follow their fancy still.

"Us old blokes," it was with a flash of spirit explained, "won't work for no *wages!*"

It seems the scornful implication was that the new and contemptible gold-fields generation had no manhood sufficient to keep its neck from the yoke of the masters of the Golden Mile.

THE FIRST ADVENTURERS

XI

THE ETERNAL FLAME

IT was so very hot in Kalgoorlie—a thin, dry, blazing heat, widely distinguished from the thick oppression of a humid hot wave—that a swift shock of surprise and concern accompanied a first plunge into the white sunlight; nor was a venture from the shady side of the broad street thereafter to be undertaken—at least by any stranger—without a momentary pause of speculation as to the outcome of the foolhardiness of it. It was amazing to discover that the sun could strike so straight and keen and deep, that it could blind and daze a man. Unofficially it was said to be one hundred and sixteen in the shade. It is quite beyond my temerity—this estimate being taken for accurate within a range of six or seven degrees—to compute the sun temperature of that mid-morning. It would storm, they said. Rain? Oh no! It wouldn't *rain!* It hadn't really *rained*—not rained in any quantity to make the gold-fields proud—for more than three years. Nobody *expected* rain. But it would blow a gale—a dust-wind; and when the sand had settled the temperature would surely fall to a point which would at least relieve a timid traveler of the expectation of being roasted in his habiliments before he could escape

the country. Beyond town, where the old dry-blowers work, there was no breeze; the flat, red land—desert without end and all stripped and scarred and soiled—was almost intolerable. The heat struck down and rebounded with hardly diminished fervor; no breath of wind stirred in the dry world and there was no gauze of cloud or impalpable contents of the air to mitigate the scorching quality of the light.

By and by I sat down on some old mound of waste earth to rest a little from the toil of wandering these famed acres in that disheartening weather. Near by, at the edge of a deep trench, an old man—an old, old man—was with dull patience shaking his diggings through an antiquated invention for sifting. He was the oldest man I ever saw at labor—a ragged, bent, knee-sprung agglomeration of bones and dried-out muscle and disreputable gray hair; and he was lean and wrinkled beyond belief, and burned a leathery red, tanned, indeed, to the depth of a hide from the vat, as though through skin and flesh to the marrow of his crazy skeleton. I gave him good-day and begged the favor of permission to watch his work. He would not look at me; but he shifted his glance, uneasy, troubled by shyness as by a stab of physical pain, and was momentarily conscious of a strange presence, I am sure. I should have gone away, disconcerted, ashamed of this intrusion, had I not perceived that the next instant he had forgotten me, that the plain was blank again in so far as he was in any way aware. Presently, with a gesture and angry mutter of disgust, he gave up a futile search of the sieves and sat to rest in a vacant way; and then, all at once, grimly renewing a determination which must in its prime have been of

gigantically dynamic proportions, he gathered some siftings in his pan and tossed them up and caught them back. There was no wind; no dust drifted off; and so he must employ his old lungs for bellows, and blow and wheeze and gasp until he fairly panted for breath sufficient to his own need.

As the ghastly operation drew to its close I observed that he was agitated with expectation. His legs trembled, the pan shook in his hands; the old fever of the gold-search began to burn again—to stimulate his hope. But nothing came of it—nothing—not a speck to reward the labor of his morning. His interest collapsed. The pan fell at his feet. And he sat down again, and fanned the flies from the grimy sweat of his lean, red face, and disconsolately smoothed his dusty white beard, and sighed—all as though fortune had dealt him a foul blow.

"I can't rise no color," he muttered.

Conceiving this observation to have been addressed to me, I inquired:

"Why, then, do you dig in this place?"

"I can't rise no color," he repeated.

"Since when," said I, "have you had any luck?"

"Jus'—*can't*—rise—no—color!"

He was still spasmodically fanning off the ghoulish flies, still occasionally tugging in bewilderment at his old gray beard, still sighing, still staring, disconsolate, into the vacancy of his world. I perceived that he had not spoken to me, that his consciousness did not stray beyond the boundaries of his disappointment, that the plain was still blank of any presence save his own.

"And I'm a *patient* man," he sighed, despairing. "I'm—a—very—patient—man."

Beyond this demented man I fell in with a communicative old fellow who seemed with unexampled and most exemplary courage to have preserved a joyous delight with life through all his years of goldfields luck and failure. He apologized at once for the unsocial habit of digging alone. His mate (said he)—this in the Australian vernacular being the equivalent of the American "pardner"—with whom he had shared fortunes for twenty-seven years, the fat and lean of them all, had died and been stowed away two years before. He had himself been landed in Melbourne in 1859, to win quick riches and live a gentleman all the rest of his days—fifty-four years ago; and he had been no raw youngster (said he) even in those historic years. "Aged eighty-one, sir, this summer. You wouldn't credit it, would ye, sir, in a old bloke o' my power?" In outward aspect he was not by so much as a blackfellow's wash (which is no wash at all) improved above his wretched neighbor; his state was in every way quite as deplorable, his rags as inadequate, his layer of wet, red dust as deep and as wide-spread and as permanent. But vicissitude had not daunted him: he was still vastly confident of turning the tables on Fate; and he lived well enough, for a hard old digger like him (said he), on his takings and the old-age pension of seven shillings a week. Moreover—if one could believe the sly admission—he knew the secrets of these fields. Ah, there were many, many secrets!—abandoned claims which had fabulously yielded in the early days. This very spot—the very hole he was digging over—had given a fortune to a Frenchman in '98.

"What luck this morning?" I asked.

"Ah, well," said he, "I reckon I'll strike a bit o' color this afternoon."

It would be hard luck, I agreed, if the day should fail him.

"Ah, well," said he, "I reckon I'll strike it to-morrow, anyhow. *That*," said he, positively, "I'm *sure* of."

In the mean time I had in an absent way been whirling some siftings about in the old man's pan—sometimes throwing up the dirt, for sport, and awkwardly recapturing it, and once in a while blowing off the confusing dust. There had in the beginning been no motive in this play; but by this time, curiously, I was possessed of a lively wish to discover whether or not some grains of gold would lie disclosed in the heavy residue when I had blown the pan out. I began to toss the dirt in earnest, and to blow with determined intention to see the little adventure through to the end. And observing this genuine absorption, the old man kept watch with me for the color of gold.

And—

"Ha!" he cried, pouncing with delicate touch upon a pitiful little yellow speck.

And—

"Ha!" I cried, too. "This isn't *too* bad! I reckon I'll blow another pan!"

Upon this the old man looked me straight in the eye and chuckled in a way to indicate that the joke was on me. Presently he was laughing so heartily that he held his old sides to ease the spasm. A fancy that he would soon shake himself to pieces, that in another instant he would lie in tatters and fragments before my very eyes, had a more excellent inspiration

than many a laughable exaggeration I have encountered in books. I had felt a touch of the fever, he declared, when he could command himself; and this was true enough, to be sure, and excuse enough —attacking me on these depleted old diggings—for any man's laughter. But now, when this hearty explosion of his humor had crackled off in little chuckles and gasps and had at last vanished in grins, and when I had been shown a glass vial which contained a few grains of gold, and when I had hemmed and hawed and doubtfully ventured to propose an exchange of ten shillings for the receptacle and its contents, a frightful change came upon the old man. He began to weep, to pray in the midst of his sobs that God Almighty Himself would shower me with blessings for this manifestation of generosity. And I stood astonished, for I had thought him not impoverished beyond the ample satisfaction of his need. This disclosure—the brave and merry demeanor of the old fellow which now in collapse seemed almost to have been a resplendent achievement of character—would shock any man to search his own soul for some quality to equal that splendid independence.

Aged eighty-one—and a prodigal! And it turned out that he had not dug the worth of five shillings in a month!

XII

"DRINK AND THE DEVIL"

I CALLED at the shack of the English Lord, but found him gone to a public-house with the Old Professor; and I have no means of knowing that he did not thrash the jockey, that he was not guilty of shady race-track practices under the very nose of the Prince of Wales, that he had not declined to marry the lady of his father's choice, that the Duke had not forbidden him the estates and heartlessly disinherited him, that he was not a gentleman of education and breeding and of a charming conversational capacity in his cups, nor can I controvert the assertion that he would, and could, with aristocratic grace borrow a blind beggar-woman's last penny. I discreetly avoided the political Irishman, being warned that the latest news of the progress of Home Rule in the British Parliament—his departure from home must have dated from the days of Gladstone—had so enraged him that he had threatened the lives of all the cronies he possessed were he so much as addressed on any topic under the sun. He dug and sifted and blew dust in a fury with the far-away members of Parliament; and, under the stars, he mouthed his indignation all alone. I fell in with the Miser—a disgusting ancient of the Coolgardie

diggings. He was rich, he was surly, he was dirty, he was ragged, he was too busy to tolerate an interruption; he had found gold in the early days, he was known to the bankers of Kalgoorlie—ten thousand pounds sterling would not measure his fortune (they said); yet he could find no happier occupation than grubbing for an added store of gold.

I went from graybeard to graybeard, from foul hulk to foul hulk, from hovel to hovel, going across and around the red-hot fields in a rising sandy wind; and I found no young men, but only the wrecks of the old days—a hundred broken victims of the gold-search. "I'll raise the color this afternoon! I'll strike it to-morrow! *That* I'm *sure* of!" They were settled here, they lived in shanties out of the dead town of Coolgardie, they burrowed the deserts for miles in every direction, they prospected with spirit as far as their lean old legs would carry them. "I'll raise the color this afternoon! I'll strike it to-morrow! *That* I'm *sure* of!" After all, whatever was to be deplored, they were not greatly to be pitied, but rather, with discrimination, to be regarded with a good measure of astounded approbation. "I'll raise the color this afternoon! I'll strike it to-morrow! *That* I'm *sure* of!" They burdened nobody; they had not come to the bitter pass—the helpless, whimpering, useless hours—of other aged failures. "I'll raise the color this afternoon! I'll strike it to-morrow! *That* I'm *sure* of!" They were old—very, very old. And they were dirty—very, very dirty—and reprobate as well. But the days did not drag, and life was not exhausted, and hope flamed undiminished, and expectation of good fortune came fresh and inspiring with every sunrise.

"RAISING A BIT OF COLOR"

"I'll raise the color this afternoon! I'll strike it to-morrow! *That* I'm *sure* of!" Presently the wind drove me away from the enchantment of these old diggings, from the wreckage left to wither within sight of the London stockholders' Golden Mile.

Where the road turns to the first public-houses of the town, I encountered a red little Irishman shambling out to some burrow and patch of canvas that was his home—in haste too eager for his strength, it seemed, to escape the dust-storm. Never had I beheld an object so forlorn. His faded dungaree trousers, turned up near to the original knees, yet slouching over his shoes, his long black coat, cut in the eighties, I am sure, for a man twice the weight of this little Irish manikin, flapped about his bones like the garments of a scarecrow. Had some scarecrow of the fields come to life and shuffled out of a public-house much the worse of his stay, I should not have been shaken with more surprise and reproachful amusement. Nor can I imagine a more wasted little man, nor a more gargoylish countenance, nor a limper and more perforated and tattered bush hat, nor a more gigantic head topping a more diminutive body, nor a greater wastrel and more obvious outcast with a more positively philosophical cast and expanse of brow, nor deeper drifts and smears of damp gold-fields dust. He must once have been brown; the sun must surely have tanned him deep—and *did* tan him deep, I'll be bound; but the process had been continued until the little man was now eventually bleached a ghastly white except where a multitude of freckles lay in shocking contrast with his pallor and emaciation. And I stopped to look him over. And he

stopped to look me over. Surely one gentleman may without offense pause on the road to appraise the quality and condition of another! And so we eyed each other, his glance a frigid regard.

"Good day, sir," said I.

"Good day t' *you!*" he retorted.

"You—work over yonder?"

"I do thot."

No resentment was implied. I gained courage to continue more intimately.

"Here in the early days?" I inquired.

"I was thot."

"It seems," I ventured, "that you—that you—were not visited by good fortune."

"I was not."

"Too bad!" said I.

"It is not. I'm glad of ut."

"You are glad—"

"I am."

"But—" I began.

"Them that struck it rich," said he, "is all dead o' drink. Years ago," he chuckled. "Long ago!"

What fortune the old man had and prized—fortune above the wasted wealth of dead men—was the breath of life in his withered body. He was alive—alive!

A dust-storm came down—a cloud of driving hot sand from the encircling dry waste. It darkened the day, it swept the diggings and choked the shanties, it enveloped the Golden Mile in a mist more terrible than the smoke of its prosperity, it ran swishing through the streets of the town. It blew like a black blizzard. Bang went the windows;

bang went the doors! All the decrepit old neighbors of the lusty Golden Mile took to the shelter of their hovels—until, when the gale failed and the stars shone out, their camp-fires began to glimmer in the shadows and blessed cool of evening.

XIII

A DAY OR TWO IN THE DRYLANDS

RIDING out from Kalgoorlie, eastward, to the edge of the habitable places, and somewhat beyond, we came at last to a rocky elevation from which the land fell sharply to a flat alkaline wilderness. From this desolate hill, for the moment appalled by what we saw, we looked off in the long, dry direction of the center of the continent—those many of miles of still disreputable country, concerning which many confusing tales are told, these having variously to do with grass-lands and stony deserts, with wide, hopeless wastes of scrub and dust, with new domains of pastoral land awaiting settlement, and with good-pastured stock-routes and waterless tracts of sand and spinnifex. Whatever quality these lands may at last turn out to have here, at any rate, four hundred miles from the fertile coastal reaches and well past the remotest desert mine, was the end of the Western Australian world. There were no habitations beyond: no path led on to the east. From the crest of the hill we had a glimpse of the very sorriest habitable Australian country.

We faced a flaming wilderness—a red prospect, splashed with the green of hardy scrub, its distances,

where a sullen wind was stirring, lying in a haze of heat and crimson dust, out of which the sky rose pallid, vaulting overhead high and hot and deepest blue. Behind us the lean trees—the quick and the dead—ran diminishing to the north, and there vanished, discouraged. From the salt-land to the south they seemed to shrink aghast—to huddle back upon themselves and deviate over the horizon in fright and haste. There was a vast salt-pan below, somewhat forward into the waste, stretching an ugly length farther than sight could carry from the crest of the hill, with straits, bays, bluff shores, meadows of white slime—a chain of dry, incrusted lakes, most treacherous to cross, being in wide spaces coated thin above quagmires of salty mud, the shores a quicksand, the surface foul and deadly (they said) with a low-lying, poisonous vapor.

Presently it will be possible to land at Freemantle of Western Australia and pass by railroad to Sydney much as one might go from San Francisco to New York by way of New Orleans. But there is no overland trail going east and west through the central drylands; nor ever was—nor ever can be. These inimical lands, which now glowed red-hot beyond us, are a wide, effectual barrier, stretching from the middle southern shores, which are uninhabitable, far up toward the abundant tropical country in the north, which is hardly inhabited. No mild traveler could adventure far to the east of where we stood and for long endure the miseries of his journey. An expedition of proportions, outfitted with experienced precaution—a sea[illegible]ed leader with his camels and bushmen and bi[illegible]fellows—could not

advance through the center from Kalgoorlie and come safely to the nearest settlements of Sydney Side except by grace of those fortuitous chances which men in the extremity of distress call the goodness of Providence.

Returning afoot from this depressing prospect to a new point of departure, we came soon to a shallow gully, which I fancied we had not penetrated on our devious course to the crest of the hill. And here our bushman—himself regarding the feat as a meanest commonplace of the bush—displayed a certain astonishing aptitude. Truly he was a very dirty white man—a monstrously lazy fellow! Yet in a way most highly to commend him he was given to industrious reflection upon all the faint little traces of desert life he encountered as we went along. These absorbed him, occasionally, much as an interval of deep thinking sometimes abstracts a scholar from his company. He would interrupt himself to stare at some small space of earth; and at the end of the pause, having achieved an inference to his satisfaction, he would abruptly resume his way and conversation. As I look back upon him—listening again to his slow revelations—it seems to me that he coveted bush lore more than a man should wish for anything and seek it at a price.

"We did not come this way," I maintained.

"Ah, yes," he yawned.

I insisted that this was not so.

"Ah, well," he drawled, eying me with amusement, "I see the tracks, right enough."

Now the ground hereabouts was of red earth mixed with gravel and outcroppings of ironstone, which nearly matched its color. It was baked so

hard that the press of a heel left no trace that I could descry; and it gripped the stones so fast that to be dislodged they must be kicked out. It seemed that a man would have no trace whatsoever of his passing. I returned a little upon our immediate tracks, looking for some sign of our passage of this path which I knew we had followed; but, though the search was both deliberate and diligent, it did not reveal to me the slightest indication that the ground had in any way been disturbed. Altogether baffled—somewhat incredulous, too—I demanded to be shown the tracks which the bushman had observed. And he pointed forward a matter of six paces. Yet after a period of painstaking observation I could distinguish nothing; nor could I find the sign until the bushman advanced in impatient disgust with my incapacity and put his finger on it.

It was a dislodged pebble, no larger than a peach-stone, the measure of its disturbance in its mold being not more, I am sure, than an eighth of an inch.

"Why, dod-blime me," the bushman exploded, "I could follow this track on a gallop!"

Off he went, on a sort of slow run, to make good this gigantic boast; and make it good he did, sure enough—coming now and again to a sharp standstill to indicate the whereabouts of an overturned stone or a broken twig of dead brushwood. The display of this sharp, sure sight, swiftly engaging its object, was a more amazing performance of the sort than I had ever hoped to behold. Presently he stopped to declare that half a dozen paces beyond I had on our outward course halted to make a cigarette. When he pointed out the fresh-charred stub of a match it was, of course, obvious that one of our party had

in that place begun to smoke. But why I? A few flakes of my peculiar tobacco, which I had not observed—nor had I observed the stub of the match—sufficiently disclosed my identity. It was evidence enough to hang a man. Yet it was not a difficult inference. The bushman's feat was this: that as he ran he had caught sight of the stub of the match and the flakes of tobacco.

After that he paused once more to say that I had at that point "made a note in the little book." I did not recall the circumstance. It was, at any rate, my custom to make jottings secretly. And, moreover, I had not walked with the bushman to the crest of the hill. He had been far ahead. How then should he be aware that I had at any time "made a note in the little book"? My eyes could discover no indication of the fact. But it was no great mystery. Some scattered chips of cedar, which I had failed to detect, disclosed that a pencil had there been pointed. That the pencil had been employed was an inevitable inference. It was all so very obvious, indeed, that the presence of the cedar chips thereabouts should in the first instance have been instantly inferred from the bushman's remark. In all this, it will be noted, the inferences were easily drawn. Yet to infer immediately was something of an achievement. And to pick up these obscure indications in swiftly passing was an extraordinary triumph of observation.

"These 'ere tracks," said the bushman, as we resumed our way, "is all my tracks."

Among the evidences this man was following, the mark of a heel or toe would have been eloquent—to say nothing of its prolixity—as compared with what

confronted him. But there were no imprints. There was nothing whatsoever except here and there a dislodged stone and here and there a broken twig. It is obvious that a freshly disturbed stone indicates surely enough the track of a man in a land in which no considerable beasts can be imagined to have traversed. That it should disclose the identity of the passenger is quite as obviously out of the question. I was not aware that I was in the habit of disturbing the earth in a peculiar way. Nor could I conceive that the Artist was accustomed to set his foot on a twig in a fashion to betray him as the author of the fracture. Nor could I observe that in his progress the bushman himself dislodged the stones in a manner so singular that he could confidently recognize the work of his toe as his own.

It was a mystery of the Australian bush. I made haste to solve it.

"How do you know?" I demanded.

"I *made* 'em!" he scoffed. "*Think I aren't got scnse enough to know my own tracks?*"

In a baffled attempt to reach the center of the continent, one of the first explorers, being forced long ago to summer in this selfsame latitude—much as an Arctic explorer winters on his ground—found far to the east of where we journeyed a shade temperature of 132°, which rose in the sun to 157°. The mean temperature for January, in that situation and exceptional season, was 104° in the shade. "The ground was thoroughly heated to a depth of three or four feet," he records; "and the tremendous heat had parched all vegetation. Under its effects every screw in our boxes had been drawn.

Horn handles and combs were split into fine laminæ. The lead dropped out of our pencils. Our hair, as well as the sheep's wool, ceased to grow, and our nails became brittle as glass. The flour lost more than eight per cent. of its original weight. We were obliged to bury our wax candles. We found it difficult to write or draw, so rapidly did the fluid dry in our pens and brushes."

Truly a shriveled and terrible world to journey through!

It was now Christmas weather. We were not much more than a fortnight into January. It was, therefore, hot and dry. The land was at its worst. With a previous experience on the gold-fields as a basis of approximation we made sure that the temperature was reaching for 120° in the shade and would triumphantly achieve it before the day was out. Yet life was far better than tolerable. Though the sun blistered—blistered quick and sure and painfully as a mustard-plaster—it did not strike any traveler down. Coming out through the Indian Ocean, we had been told of a young gentleman who had sacrificed his life in a supererogation of gallantry by raising his helmet in farewell to a lady at the wharves of Colombo. In the humid tropics fear of the sun is instinctive. But here in this dry open the sun showed no grave menace. And we were not oppressed. That day we drew breath with ease and satisfaction. If we were not excessively exhilarated by the quality of the weather, we were at least greatly amused.

All at once a diminutive whirlwind took life under our very feet and went swishing and swirling to the east.

"What's that?" cried the Artist, astounded.

It might have been a partridge whirring to new cover.

"A little willy-willy," said the bushman.

It was a singular phenomenon. Its force and activity were amazing; and the noise it made—the swish and hum and crackle of it—astonished us no less. We watched its erratic course. Its outline was definite. Its path no man could guess. And it moved swiftly, only occasionally stopping in indecision to spin like a top. It darted, it swerved, it circled. Had it returned upon its tracks—and there was no certainty that it would not immediately do so—we should have taken to our heels! It was so visible and small that, having short warning, we might have leaped aside and escaped. And a man would earnestly desire to elude it. It had a fearsome violence: it caught up the twigs, it scattered the pebbles, it tore at the scrub, it gathered a cloud of dust. When last it vanished, a thick red mist, high in the air, we laughed heartily at this comical little six-foot cyclone, as we were then disposed to regard it.

Traveling subsequently in the midst of a host of these small winds, we had no laughter left.

Precisely speaking, the willy-willies are those destructive cyclones which originate in the ocean to the north of the continent and, blowing to the southwest, fall heavily on the northerly Western Australian coast from December to March. Off Ninety Mile Beach, near Broome, the pearl-fishers call them Cock-eyed Bobs. Some years ago two visitations of the willy-willies sent sixty luggers to the bottom and accounted for the disappearance of three hundred men

and more. It is now the custom of the pearlers to lie discreetly in harbor during the willy-willy season. If, however, the great willy-willy, instead of following the coast line in a southerly direction, deviates to the west, as sometimes happens, it crosses the continent to the Great Australian Bight, on the south coast, and its course is marked by torrential rains. A fall of as much as twenty-nine and one half inches has been recorded. All the drylands—where, too, we traveled—are in this way sometimes refreshed.

XIV

THE SWAGMAN'S STORY

RETREATING westward, we were presently confronted from the trunk of a gnarled dead tree by a singular wayside sign-board. It announced the proximity of a public-house, three miles distant into the bush, and bade all wise travelers leave the road and seek entertainment for themselves and beasts in that direction, to live and let live being the true policy of the establishment. So quaint was the flavor of this, and so astonishingly out of the way was the situation of the inn, that we were at once enlisted to visit it. Having in lively expectation accomplished these slow miles, we were dashed to find the tavern-keeper absconded and his house closed by the sheriff and fallen into ghostly disrepair. We were deeply chagrined, indeed, for here was a rarely mysterious tavern, drearily alone and remote in this sand and scrub—no half-way house, but the lost dwelling of these parts; and we wondered what manner of rascal had kept the place, what peculiar villainy he had practised, what strange variety of patronage he had drawn from the waste. No highwaymen were riding the country—nor had ever ridden the country—to stimulate the imagination concerning this forsaken inn. Its secrets were

not those of a romantic rascality—of nothing but the sordid villainy of foully robbing drunken travelers of their gold. Vile traps these are—these lonely inns of the remote Australian back-blocks.

On our way back to the trail we encountered a hairy, dusty, ragged fellow pedaling a bicycle through the scrub, a swag on his back. He was all in a lather with the labor of his haste. Whether he was miner, prospector, cattle-man, or sundowner (tramp), there was no telling. At any rate, he was riding for liquor, as he was quite frank to say, and fast going mad for it. It was "a case of the dry horrors" with him (said he); and he was vastly disgruntled with our news that the tavern was closed up. Perking up, however, in our company, he seemed in no bad way, after all, and presently told us, as we went along, that some days before, traveling the edge of the "nigger country" to the north, he had fallen in with a roving band of gins (blackwomen), with whom he had enjoyed an astonishment which still kept him laughing. What these savage women were about, wandering the country without men, far from their tribe, he could not discover; but as they were daubed with clay he concluded that they were mourning some death. What amused him was this: that as he rode near he was to his dumfounded amazement addressed in lackadaisical English by a young woman (he vowed) who was not only the dirtiest, but quite the nudest and most primitively unconcerned of all the chocolate "mob."

"Really," she drawled, "don't you find the weather rather oppressive?"

At this the swagman blasphemed his surprise.

"If you were to address me in French," said the

young woman, with sweeping dignity, "I should have no difficulty in comprehending you."

It turned out that this aboriginal maiden had, according to her story, been reared from childhood by a lady of Adelaide—that she had reverted to the bush and was then with her tribe. Whether for good and all she did not know: she might return to the lady some day—to play the piano. And she tittered like a school-girl (said the swagman); and she chaffed and giggled and chattered in the most flirtatious manner of the settlements, not in the least perturbed, moreover, being now in the bush, by the shocking fact that she was in the garb of the bush. Now this was the swagman's tale. It is not mine. But there is no great reason to doubt it. It seems that aboriginals of both sexes, employed in the towns —the employment of aboriginal women is rigorously restricted by the government—must periodically return to the bush. They remain content for a time, sufficient servants, in some cases, if lazy. And then the inevitable interval: off they scamper, without warning; and they strip themselves of the last clogging connection with civilization, and cache their garments against the time of return, and run wild to their satisfaction, returning, by and by, as if they had not been absent at all. Everywhere on the edge of the wild lands tales are told like the swagman's story of the tittering ward of the good lady of Adelaide—told with scorn of this philanthropic endeavor.

"Just beasts," said the swagman.

And he abandoned our slow course, being in mad haste, as he confessed, to ease his pitiable state in the first public-house he could manage to discover.

XV

OUTCAST

ONE day we rode into a wide reach of primeval bush which not even the wretched gatherers of sandalwood had combed for the dead branches of their meager living. From a rise of the land—slowly down and far away—it was like a mc. t jungle, a low, impenetrable tangle; but it thinned, as we entered, into an open growth of slender, delicately lovely and diminutive trees, springing in blithe health from the sandy earth, many of them peculiar to the Australian world, like the kangaroo—she-oaks (said the bushman) and gimlet-trees, salmon gum, mulga, tea-trees, thorny spinnifex, and succulent sage-bush. A stretch of dry, blazing days, intolerable to an American forest, had not in the least diminished the spirit of this hardy bush. Not a leaf was wilted, that we could see, nor did any branch droop. These pretty midgets were as fresh and clean and fat with their small nourishment as from the rain of an abundant yesterday. We saw no ailing tree, but only the green shades of good health—a curious variety of color, against the red and blue of the world, deepening from a tinge of gray to the darkest shade of green. Yet there were many gaunt dead mingled with the quick, which seemed to have died of sheer

old age—curly, gnarled dwarfs, bleached white, so old that we ached to contemplate their length of days, striving in this mean desert land.

In the thin shade of a salmon-gum we rested for an hour with a bushman who had a hut in the scrub on the edge of the salt-lands and was then trudging to a broken mining town of the neighborhood for a sack of flour. He lived with the blacks (said he)—a condition so degraded in Australia that few men challenge its obloquy—and was even married with them according to their customs and his own. A red-bearded, vacant fellow in filthy tweed, he was a disgusting creature, without sensibility—thus fallen too low for pity. He was outcast. What future he had lay with the bestial savages in the inferno of sun and sand beyond the frontier. And these savage brothers—there had been some bloody heathen ceremony of initiation to tribe and family—he now cursed for mistrusting him. Brothers? Ha, ha! *Brothers*—were they? No fear! They would tell a white man precious little (he sneered) of their mysteries. How much would a blackfellow tell a white man about magic? Huh? Haw, haw! And how about message-sticks? How much would a blackfellow tell a white man about message-sticks? They'd lie—oh yes, they'd *lie!* And from all this we made out that our outcast was newly returned from a protracted visitation with his savages and was in the worst of humor with his welcome.

"Out back," he complained, sullenly, indicating the desolation to the east with a petulant sweep, "they got everything fixed."

"Who?"

"Who?" he echoed. "Why, the dashed old men!"

Specificaliy what?

"It's all fixed to keep the old men comfortable," said he. "What's right and what's wrong, I mean. It's mostly religion—magic. I reckon their religion was *made* by old men. If I was an old man I'd make one just like it if I could. Don't you reckon that what's right and what's wrong depends on who has the power to say so? I do. I'm a Socialist. Take grub. Grub's a good example. Grub's scarce with the blackfellows, isn't it? Well, the old men get the best of the grub. That's law—that's religion. It's one of the Ten Commandments. A young fellow can't eat a nice big snake. It wouldn't be religious. He's got to take that snake to his father-in-law. Why? Because a snake's *good*. And there's a whole lot of other good things that a young fellow can't eat. He can't eat anything at all that's nourishing and real fat and juicy. He can't eat a lizard. If he ate a lizard it would be just the same as crime—and that's the same as sin, isn't it? Maybe he wouldn't go to hell for it; but he'd *get* hell fast enough, if they caught him at it. If they didn't catch him? Oh, they've got *that* fixed! They teach the little shavers that if they eat lizards they'll swell up and bust. And it works, too—just about as well as the same sort of thing works with us. You see, they've got their own notions of right and wrong. But their notions of right and wrong are not the same as our notions of right and wrong. And that's queer. Why shouldn't they be?"

There was an interval through which the outcast bushman heavily pondered.

"I wonder what *is* right," said he, perplexed, "and what *is* wrong."

We left him in the thin shade of the salmon-gum —doubtless continuing to contemplate this grave problem. And we inferred that he had been piously reared.

XVI

A WAYSIDE INN

IN the heat of a mid-afternoon we came to a broken mining town. In its brief day of promise it had made a great noise in the Western Australian world. They had planned it large, with quick, leaping enthusiasm, in the Western Australian way; and, though it was here set far back into the desert, they would surely have made it large, with Australian vigor and determination to thrive big and powerful, had the earth yielded a good measure of its first encouragement. Its one street, up the broiling, deserted vista of which the bitter red dust was blowing, was wide enough for the traffic of any metropolis; and the disintegrating skeleton of a magnificent boulevard, concerned with high courage in these drylands, implied a splendid vision of that lovely maturity to which the town had never attained. The town had lived fast and failed. It was now as pitiable as the wreck of any aspiration—as any young promise which has broken in the test and at last got past the time when faith can endure to contemplate it. The people had vanished, taking their habitations with them, in the gold-fields manner, to new fields of promise. They had not left much to mark the site of their brave ambition. A hot, list-

less group of corrugated-iron dwellings remained—a public-house, too, and a spick-and-span police-station and a sad little graveyard.

A fat landlady, performing the office of barmaid, resolutely interrupted our way to the public bar and bade us into the parlor, which was better suited (she said) to our quality. In this her concern was most anxious. It was apparent from her air of indulgent consideration that, perceiving us to be strangers, she had with great good nature made haste to rescue us from a breach of gentle behavior. It seems that, remote as this far country is from the usages of Home, one is still expected to choose one's pot-house company with self-respect and decent precision. And a variety of opportunity is frequently afforded—bars outer, middle, inner and parlor. No thirsty man need stray from his established station: should he drop into company beneath him, he may blame himself; and should he intrude among his betters, let him take the scowling consequences! The parlor is, of course, the resort of unquestioned gentility; but precisely what distinctions admit a patron to the qualified respectability of the inner bar, and what lack of quality banishes him to the outer, I could not by any means make out. The moral of it all, though it be derived from nothing better than a pot-house arrangement and the solicitude of a mining-town landlady, is broad: the Australians still live astonishingly close to the caste traditions of Home.

Our landlady was a rippling, genial body, flushed and smiling with intimate and honest hospitality, and did what she could to refresh us according to our temperate humor. This was not much. She

had no ice: no ice could survive the red-hot journey to that town; and as for the beverages of discretion—she laughed long to shame us from such callow and injurious habits. Her parlor was darkened—a grateful relief from the blistering agony of the white light of day; and it was happily separated from the public-room by nothing more than a stretch of bar and the small difference between a sixpence and shilling per glass of tipple—drawn from the same cask. Here we fell in amiable conversation with a casual miner who had dropped in from some desperate little show (mine) of his for the refreshment of a glass of lukewarm ale. He was not a parlor patron—in appearance not at all of parlor quality—being frowsy, plastered, and speckled with dried mud, a little the worse of life. From the public-room he talked across to the shadows where we sat in rather embarrassed superiority,—not used to these accepted distinctions; and he ran on in a free, lively fashion, his accent and vernacular more nearly resembling those of an Englishman, it seemed, than they approached the Cockney speech of the Australian back-blocks.

"It *is* remarkable," he agreed, at last. "I can't account for it."

Our mystification had to do with the men who perish of thirst. They strip themselves, poor wretches, in their desperate wanderings; ar' stripped to the skin the trackers find them—stark naked, their hands bloody with digging, their eyes wide open and white, their tongues swollen clean out of their mouths. Nor are these deaths occasional. They are frequent. It is a dry land—all these wilderness miles. No rivers water it. There are no oases. A rainfall

vanishes like an illusion. Travelers beyond the tanks venture recklessly. They must chance the rainfall; and failing the rare rains, they must find water in soaks and gnamma-holes or perish in their tracks—the soak being a basin scooped in the sand at the base of a granite rock, and the gnamma-hole a great cavity in the granite, from which the last rain has not evaporated. And all the water is illusive: it fails or changes place—being here and there or not at all—as the seasons run. A punctured water-bag is sentence of death. Many a man, lost alone, has died alone, cursing a thorn—convicts of the old days, escaping without hope over the desert to the settlements of South Australia, and prospectors of the days of the rush, pushing the search beyond the boundaries of caution. Travelers returning from the deserts—the prospectors of these better-informed days—casually report the skeletons.

It is all true of the country we rode—these worst Australian lands.

"A chap got lost out here in the early days," the miner went on. "Came out from Home, you know, and struck an everlasting fortune at Kalgoorlie. Wild times—those days. My word! I saw the Hand-to-Mouth squandered. They sold that show to an English syndicate for £30,000 and dissipated every bally shilling before they quit. Everything free to everybody—and every barmaid a harpy and every publican a leech. It didn't take long. And the Australia. They were so hot to get rid of that mine that they paid £1,200 for cablegrams—expert reports and all that—before the deal was closed in London; and there wasn't anything too good for the gold-fields while the £24,000 held out.

But what should this chap I'm telling you about do but buy a musical barmaid. Fell madly in love with her, you know. Took her to London, too. Well, what should she do, when he'd knocked down his cash, but raise the fan-tans and throw him over. And back he came to the gold-fields to get another fortune. No chance. What should he do then but take to the bush? Prospecting, you see. We waited a decent bit and tracked him. First thing they do, when they go mad, you know, is take off their boots. But we couldn't find *this* chap's boots. We found his hat, his jacket, trousers, shirt. When we found *him* he was stripped—feet all cut to shreds and his boots in his hand."

"Dead?"

"No fear! But there was an inch of big black tongue sticking out of his mouth, poor old chap!"

XVII

WATER!

THESE western drylands no man should penetrate distantly and alone who has not mastered the last subtleties of Australian bushcraft. A Canadian woodsman would find nothing in his experience to enlighten him. A North American Indian would perish of ignorance. A Bedouin of the sandy Arabian deserts would in any dire extremity die helpless. Australian bushcraft is a craft peculiar to the Australian bush. It concerns itself less with killing the crawling desert-life for food—and schooling a disgusted stomach to entertain it—than with divining the whereabouts of water in a land which is to the alien vision as dry as a brick in the sun. A black tracker (said our bushman) once turned in contempt from the corpse of a man who had died of thirst. He had no pity: he spat his abhorrence of the stupidity of this dead wretch. The man had died within arm's-length of water—the moist roots of some small desert tree. In the deserts to the northeast of us, mid-continent, when sun and dry winds suck the moisture from deep in the ground and all the world runs dry—the soaks and gnammaholes and most secret crevices of the trees and rocks —the aboriginals draw water from these roots by

cutting them into short lengths and letting them drain drop by drop into a wooden bowl. But the worst may come to the worst: there may be no "water trees"—or the roots may shrivel and dry up.

What then?

"Ah, well," said the bushman, "they do with what they have."

"What *have* they?"

"Ah ell, they lick the dew from the leaves and grass.'

Failing the rains, failing soaks and gnamma-holes, failing roots and the morning's dew, the aboriginal of the central drylands has a last occasional source of supply. It indicates the desperate hardship of his life and discloses the quality of his cunning. It is related by a celebrated Australian traveler and anthropologist, Baldwin Spencer, that, having come in a dry season to a dry clay-pan, bordered with withered shrubs, his company was amazed by an exhibition of aboriginal craft which seems to have been beyond compare in any savage land. There was no water—there was no moisture—within miles; and the clay was baked so hard that to be penetrated at all it must be broken with a hatchet. A keen native guide presently discerned little tracks on the ground—faintest indications of life, apparently, like obscure fossil tracers—and, having hacked into the clay to the depth of a foot, unearthed "a spherical little chamber, about three inches in diameter, in which lay a dirty yellow frog." It was a water-holding frog; and it was distended with its supply—a store sufficient, perhaps, to enable it to survive a drought of a year and a half. And the water (says the an-

ON THE EDGE OF THE DRYLANDS

thropologist) was quite pure and fresh. Being heartily squeezed, these frogs may yield a saving drought to lost and perishing travelers.

"Find a nigger," said our bushman, when, as we rode, we told him this tale, "and you'll get water."

What if the aboriginal were obdurate?

"Ah, well, if the nigger *won't* tell," the bushman explained, "you rope him by the neck to your saddle. When he gets thirsty he'll go to water right enough!"

In the back-blocks of central Western Australia, to the east of the few discouraged little government tanks of the gold-fields country, and, indeed, in the drylands to the north and south of this, there are no fixed, fresh wells, generally dependable, as in the African and Arabian deserts; and consequently there are no determined routes of travel, like the caravan-routes of the Sahara—no main-traveled roads from point to point. Nor is there any traveling back and forth. It is a wilderness. It would, however, be a rash traveler who dared generalize concerning so vast and varied a domain—a million square miles. The drylands which we rode in a midsummer drought indicate nothing at all of the quality of the tropical north; nor do they any more hint at the forests and hills and green farms of the southwest than the Arizona wastes imply the rich corn-lands of Kansas. All the while, all Australia over, now more confidently than ever before, the settlements are pushing in from the coast, amazed to discover beneficent areas where deserts were expected—pushing up from South Australia, down from the Northern Territory, doughtily westward

from Queensland and New South Wales; but here in this parched, blazing red country, baffled by the perilous and dry monotony of the land, they seem long ago to have stopped dismayed and never to have taken heart again.

We rode a little with a nondescript traveler. "Bothersome chaps—the blackfellows," said he. "You can't shoot 'em down offhand any more, you know."

"Was there ever—an open season?"

"Ah, yes," he laughed.

"Good hunting?"

He ignored this ghastly pleasantry. "You've got to have evidence to convict a blackfellow," said he. "And, damn 'em," he exploded, wrathfully, "they *know* it!"

It is a vacant land—the whole raw, wide state. Within a radius of fifteen miles from the capital city of Perth, in the fertile and established southwestern country, the population approaches one hundred thousand, and the population of the East Coolgardie gold-fields, of which the good city of Kalgoorlie is the center, approaches one hundred thousand: so that what remains of the total population of three hundred thousand, subtracting the population of the old town of Albany on the south coast and the population of the thriving Gearldton district on the middle west coast—roughly a remainder of eighty-five thousand—peoples what is left of the million square miles of territory. The little towns are scattered remotely—Wyndham, in the north, for example, with a population of one hundred and five, two thousand miles away, as one travels by camel and coach and sea, and Hall's Creek, where

sixty-three whites are exiled in twenty-five hundred miles of distance and many weeks of time, happily and prosperously, no doubt, and in the good health of the open. Consequently land is cheap to the settler—cheap and wide. In the Kimberley and northwest divisions pastoral leases may be had of the government in blocks of *not less* than twenty thousand acres at a rental of ten shillings a thousand acres a year—and in the central division, too, where we rode.

"What's the cheapest land in the state?" we inquired of an old prospector.

"Three shillings," said he, "down in Eucla."

"An acre?"

"O Lord, no! A thousand acres!"

"Any good?"

"Not to me," he laughed. "I'm a miner."

XVIII

A PARABLE OF TWO CAMELS

WHEN we rode out from Coolgardie with Jerry and the Australian, my own camel was an aged, grave camel, a camel of discretion, plodding reconciled and almost content, having long ago learned the sorry lesson—like a man got past his prime, it seemed—that it does not profit a beast of burden to rebel: that it is expedient rather to yield with an appearance of good humor to the inevitable mastery than to be switched for disobedience and in the end be obliged sullenly to endure an addition of bruises to the various miseries of fate. And for this reasonable and placid service of his master's comfort my camel was rewarded, according to the custom, with words of approbation. Australian bred though he was, and of descent from the camels of India, a strain which the Bedouins despise, he was the best camel (said I) that ever I rode. Of an obsequious habit, perhaps, yielding to command with disquieting little shivers of apprehension, and cautiously husbanding his speed (for exercise in seasons of need, no doubt), his acquiescence and the ease of his gait were not to be shamed even by the fabulous accomplishments of the camels of the stony wastes to the east of Damascus and of the sandy Arabian deserts.

And so warm was his reward of praise that, had he been a human servant of the pleasures of the day he would have touched his cap with a "Thank you, sir!" and grinned his satisfaction with the distinguished patronage.

Life had not taught the Artist's half-broken young beast any salutary wisdom. His complaints wearied us of the road. That he made haste when he was desired to be slack, loitering only when there was need of expedition, amused our first hilarious humor. We were not gravely annoyed, indeed, when he began with frequency to bolt—though we were somewhat concerned, it is true, for the bones of his delighted rider; nor were we in the least dismayed when he practised the device of limply flopping to his knees in an explosion of bitter protest against the labor of his day. We were considerate, truly. Had this young beast bolted with spirited determination, dismounting the Artist unhurt, and triumphantly vanishing to the freedom of the scrub in the dust of his speed and rebellion, we should have admired his enterprise and resolution; and had he stayed flat on his belly until we had beaten him to death, a martyr to his convictions, we should have buried him with respect and remembered him for ever. But a harrowing tumult of complaint measured his courage; he submitted to the first touch of the whip, roaring like a beast with a treacherous death-wound, and he yielded with a start and a squeal of fright to that pinch of the nostrils, sharp enough, no doubt, which, in the Australian way of riding a camel, can be accomplished with a twitch of the reins.

It should have been good riding for all of us. Our

journey was not many miles through the sandy bush that day. Road and weather were amiable. The world we traveled was a far-away, singular world, all of a delicate beauty, too—the wind and scrub and brilliant color and wide dry spaces. Truly the many engaging aspects of the sunlit Australian wilderness, notwithstanding the heat and drought and blistering white light of it, were in the way to charm our interest. Yet the Artist's young camel spoiled the fresh delights of that appealing road by steadily communicating his childish grief and occasionally exasperating us to crude outbursts of wrath. On he lumbered, groaning, whimpering, bellowing, sobbing, every dreary step of the way, thus establishing our reputation for savage cruelty, if such a thing could be, with all the birds and beasts of the bush for miles in every direction. And we must helplessly tolerate his misbehavior. There was no mastering him; he was like a child in a temper—bawling so wantonly, with such obstinate uproar, that at times we fancied a buckle must be prodding him somewhere, and compassionately searched to see. In the way of a wilful child he did all that he could to make us wretched—short of holding his breath and turning black in the face.

When it came time to dismount for the day we were glad to relieve this camel of the burden that so mightily injured his liberty—and gratefully willing to leave him to sulk in a miserable silence.

"I predict for that camel," said I, standing off to regard him, "a future of great misery."

"Which?" said Jerry, whose camels these were. "That camel? No fear!"

"Truly, he pities himself!"

Jerry chuckled.

"Himself alone," I added.

"G'wan!" says Jerry, sobering. "That's a first-class young camel."

"He is your camel," I replied, "and doubtless you love him."

"He'll do his work, right enough, when he grows into it."

"Never a cheerful day of it!"

"Ah, well, he'll *do* it."

"It may be true," I answered, "that he will do as much of his work as he must for those who will brutally command him. Now I know about young camels. And this young camel has certain significant defects. He cherishes his own way above the respect of others and his own pride in himself; but he has neither the courage to take his own way, whatever the cost, nor the wisdom to yield to his master, gathering what measure of happiness he can from the work that he must do and the leisure it allows him. Observe that he sulks. Always he will sulk. No sooner will he have recovered from sulking because he has had to do the work of to-day than he will begin to sulk again because he must do the work of to-morrow. And that is not the worst. Did you not remark on the road that when his cowardly rage did not move us he whimpered in a shamelessly loud and obstinate way whilst yet he performed his task? What pride had he? What consideration? And what was his best measure against obedience? This young camel appeals to the compassion of a world which has only contempt for that weakness in a camel. To gain his own way he will even practise with wicked cunning upon his

own master's pity. It is a mortal defect in a young camel. He has had a wretched day of it. I am confident that a future of great misery awaits him. Your young camel is a most unfortunate and contemptible young camel."

At the end of this long rigmarole poor Jerry was staring. He had found no parable in it.

"He's only a *camel!*" he protested.

"If I owned that camel, and loved him," said I, "I would shoot him for his own sake."

It is not to be understood that camels are commonly used in all parts of Australia. A camel in the streets of Melbourne or Sydney would doubtless create as much astonished amusement as an Alaskan reindeer on Broadway. In 1866 camels were first imported for general service from India. It was a happy experiment. A herd of more than six hundred arrived with their Afghan masters in 1884. They thrived. Indeed, they made a distinguished success of life in the colonies. It was to be expected. Aliens in Australia seem never to fail of good health and increase. It is estimated that there are now ten thousand camels at labor in the Commonwealth. This is in the far-away dry back-blocks. An Australian loves a horse and respects the sturdy worth of a bullock; he regards a camel, however, with a tolerant sort of approbation, and will not employ so outlandish and perverse a beast except to the great advantage of his needs. The Australian camel is immensely serviceable in his limited sphere. A hearty bull will carry a load of eight hundred pounds through long marches, thriving meanwhile where a horse would perish; and it is recorded that a train

of Australian-bred camels went a march of twenty-four days without water. They serve the prospectors, the explorers, some departments of the government, the remoter settlers, and the police of the drylands. The Afghan camel-man—though he is still often encountered, and was in the beginning the haughty custodian of all the camel lore of the colony—is no longer necessary to the advantageous breeding and employment of camels.

"We used to think," Jerry chuckled, "that we couldn't get along without the 'Ghans."

"Surely they knew about camels?"

"No fear!" Jerry scoffed. "They had a lot of superstitions—like curing a camel with a necklace of blue beads. And that's about all. The government breeds better camels now. That's only natural. We're white. I don't mean to say, though, that we've bred the devil out of our camels. My business is camels," he went on, "and I'm not ashamed of it. But sometimes I lose patience with the brutes. A couple of years ago I was traveling to the north of this with a train of four pack-camels. One morning, when the camels were packed I found that I had forgotten to stow away a billy-can [bushman's tea-kettle]. When I picked that little billy-can up, and made for the nearest camel, meaning to hang it on his pack, he began to bubble and groan, as if it wasn't *his* billy-can, and he'd be damned if he'd carry more than his share, and what did I mean, anyhow, by proposing to overload a poor camel that way? So to make things easy I switched off to the next camel. And *he* began to groan. They *all* groaned. The very sight of that little billy-can made them rage. Not one of them

would have it on his back. Well, I was disgusted. Instead of hanging it on a pack, I mounted my riding-camel, with the billy-can in my hands. He was horrified. Lord! how he bawled! When he got up he was bawling still. Wouldn't move a step. And then I leaned forward and shook that billy-can in his face. And that satisfied him. He quit. Off he went. Not a murmur. Why? I reckon he thought *I* was carrying that billy-can."

XIX

A NIGHT IN THE OPEN

PRESENTLY Jerry gathered his two hands full of slender brushwood for the fire. Little sticks these were—the thickness of a pencil. It was a mere matter of stooping in the neighborhood of an aged bush and sweeping his hands over the dry earth. A Canadian woodsman would have taken an ax—however warm the weather—and made a fire of such proportions that it would very near have blistered him to approach it; and he would have had the long trouble, moreover, of fashioning a means of hanging his kettle in the blaze, and would eventually have been put to the bother of extinguishing his great fire. Jerry's twigs were so dry that they flamed when he touched a match to them. In a moment they were all ablaze—a crackling, crimson, lusty little fire, giving off a thin, fragrant smoke, which we breathed with delight. Nothing persuaded us of our remoteness from the forests we knew so much as this strange fragrance: it was like the incense of a temple—a mystery to our experience. Having been filled from the canvas water-bags we carried, the billy-can was set in the midst of the fire. It was no trouble at all to do it. And so nicely had Jerry adjusted the number of little sticks to the

need of heat, that when the billy was boiling the fire was burned down to a little heap of whitening coals. It was an improving example of the economy of the Australian bushman's measure in the bush.

When we had disposed of the tea, with the bread and cold meat of our fare, we walked into the bush near by—an open growth of scrub, and of bushes and tussocks of thorny spinnifex, with some dwarfed trees. It was the time of the midsummer drought. The earth was dry and barren and baked. There was no living grass—no dead grass, prostrate and brown. All tender growth had burned up and vanished away. But this was not yet the desert to which we were bound. It is green and nourishing after the rain (they said). And at any rate the drought and heat and isolation of this small part do not characterize the vast and varied whole of the wonderful Australian world. The traveler is astonished, upon his return, to be told that Australia has been written down by some an arid waste. It is an unjust and injurious fiction. Australia is preponderantly fertile and rich, a pleasant country, with abundantly generous rewards, growing all the while more populous and rich; and the dry interior neither discomforts nor beggars the aspiring and prosperous people who dwell in the many favorable lands more than it troubles the happiness of the inhabitants of any other continent. The Australian drylands, which narrow, year by year, as they are better known, have been celebrated above the wealthy places for the sensation they afford—the hot winds, the burning days, the stony deserts and waterless sandy tracts.

Some aspects of the central interior are sensational

enough and not easily to be forgotten. It is related by one of the early explorers that, so great was the heat of the day, the stirrup-irons scorched the leather soles of his party. Matches ignited when they fell on the ground. A thermometer graduated to 127° burst its bulb in the middle of the day. A hot wind blew, filling the air with impalpable dust, through which the sun looked blood-red. The horses stood with their backs to the wind and their noses to the ground, without the muscular strength to raise their heads. The birds were mute. In that withering wind the leaves of the scrub fell around like a snow-shower. All green vegetation seemed to wilt and die in the heat. Where ten months before the cereal grasses had been in seed and the shrubs bore ripe fruit, there was neither herb nor bud visible. "I wondered," the explorer records in his diary, "that the very grass did not take fire." Yet Australia is no more completely arid and withered than Canada is completely frozen up—an extraordinary impression of Canada, by the way, which seems to be wide-spread in Australia. It is no more reasonable to infer a description of the Australian continent from the adventures of the first travelers to the interior than to draw an impression of the Canadian wheat-lands from the records of the Arctic explorers.

In the jarrah bush we met a young Englishman who had first emigrated to Canada. It was midwinter when he arrived at Halifax. A blizzard was blowing.

"Ugh!" said he. "Cold? My word! I went back on the same ship."

"Cold, of course," we protested, laughing at him for this folly; "but don't you *see*—"

"Oh, I know all about Canada," he broke in, with a very knowing grin. "I've *been* to Canada."

When we returned to the camp the sun had got below the dwarfed trees. It was a shy, quiet setting — a flush and pale afterglow. And the dusk followed quickly. In this beneficent weather our arrangements for the open were of the simplest description. It is the Australian way. The bushmen travel amazingly light. A billy-can and a blanket—the "swag" of the bush—are equipment enough for any frugal man in places within reach; and the addition of a sound horse to this opens the whole reasonably traversable Australian world to a bushman of resource, and comes near to establishing his independence. We spread a great square of canvas on the sand, to frustrate the ants, and threw the blankets within reach, for comfort in the emergency of a rising wind, and were ready for the night and the intimate tales which precede sleep in the open. Jerry yarned of camels and the Kimberley and the early gold-fields days—of water at three shillings a gallon, and of £15 to refresh the camels, and of heartily shooting an Afghan who had washed his hands in a well; and the Australian, who had with great good nature come this far with us, yarned of the customs of blackfellows and the adroitness of black trackers; and in exchange for these stories we rattled away about American speed and skyscrapers and millionaires and the dark ways of politics—which seemed here to be of more curious interest than our tales of the pine forests and abundant running rivers of the wildernesses of our own land.

XX

BLACK TRACKERS

A CELEBRATED Australian traveler, Baldwin Spencer, himself an experienced and cunning bushman, relates that in the desert region of Lake Amadeus, near the center of the continent, the bushcraft of the natives, their bewildering intimacy with the traces of desert-life, and their swift power to follow, once left him in a state of considerable astonishment, seasoned as he was. It was in the scrub of that baked land. The ground was dry and hard. Doubtless it would not readily take the impression of a heel. At any rate, when the natives stopped short to scrutinize the ground, the traveler, though obviously tracks of some sort were plain to his blackfellows, could descry nothing with his own keen eyes to enlighten him. Presently he was informed, however, that an emu was near by with her young. And upon this the natives set off in chase, moving so fast in pursuit of these faint indications, which were altogether invisible to the traveler, that the traveler, somewhat encumbered by collecting apparatus, though apparently not heavily so, found it difficult to keep up with them. At the end of a chase of two miles an emu was found in an open patch with her six young. Reflection upon this

bald achievement discloses the remarkable quality of it. The blackfellows had not only espied and identified these traces, which were so obscure that a white bushman, himself experienced, could not even see them, looking at leisure, but had correctly measured the age of them and the approximate distance which the authors had wandered.

"I am not surprised," said the Australian, when we had told him this story. "Did you ever hear the tale of the black tracker and the British officers?"

We had not heard this tale.

"It is a familiar story," said the Australian. "I wonder that you have not heard it. It is told everywhere. And it illustrates perfectly the easy accuracy with which these truly extraordinary fellows are able to observe and deduce in the exercise of their peculiar aptitude. During the South African war," the Australian went on, proceeding to the tale of the black tracker and the five skeptical British officers, "an officer of the Australian continent, then held in reserve, I fancy, boasted of the cunning of his black tracker, who was no great master of the craft, after all, until, greatly to his surprise and indignation, he found that he had exhausted the credulity of the British officers with whom he was messing. So many remarkable tales had he told, each seeming to surpass the last in improbability, that he was challenged to a trial of the blackfellow's cunning, a sporting enterprise in which, of course, he was delighted to indulge. And the conditions of the trial were these: that the five skeptical British officers, two afoot, three mounted, should start, at various intervals, in whatsoever directions they might elect, proceeding thereafter,

each according to his fancy, for a period agreed upon; and that the black tracker, knowing only the color of the horse that each mounted man rode, and having seen only the print of the shoes which each footman wore, should trace them all, within a stipulated time, subsequently reporting the movements of each with reasonable accuracy.

"'Is it agreed,' said one of the officers, 'that we may obscure our tracks?'

"'It is so agreed.'

"'Must we keep to soft ground?'

"'Oh, my word, no!' the Australian laughed. 'No, no, no! I have no wish to take advantage of you. Go where you like.'

"'May we take off our shoes?'

"'Yes, yes! Of course!'

"'I say, though, that 'll make it rather awkward fo' the tracker, won't it?'

"'O Lord!' the Australian groaned. 'That's what you jolly well want to do, isn't it? Don't spare the tracker. He'll be right enough. And I warn you that your efforts to confuse him will probably furnish him with a good deal of amusement.'

"It turned out as the Australian had predicted. The tracker had an entertaining day of it. He returned contemptuous of the bushcraft of the five skeptical British officers. But he had not been spared. The five skeptical officers had taken to stony ground and sought in every way to bewilder him. He had followed the tracks of the mounted men, however, on a run, identifying and distinguishing the movements of each by the colors of the horses, dark-brown hairs, light-brown hairs, gray hairs, samples of which he produced; and in addition

to this he described, more or less intimately, the incidents of the ride of each: the first horseman, for example, had dismounted and lighted his pipe; the second had been thrown when riding at a canter; the third had dismounted, rested in the shade, climbed a tree for a view of the country—for a view, presumably, because there was no other reason why he should have climbed the tree—no 'possum, no sugar-bag. And the movements of the footmen, also, were correctly described. One had tramped his course without pause or incident; but the other, having taken off his shoes, according to the evidence of a wisp or two of wool from his socks, had cut his foot and gone lame the rest of the way, as a stone with a speck of blood disclosed. When the tracker concluded his revelations, it was agreed by the five British officers, now convinced of his skill, that his report was ample, that he had not made a single mistake, and that he had fulfilled all the conditions of the trial in a way to astound them."

Black trackers are regularly attached to the police-stations of the outlands. They are the bloodhounds of the corps. And though many of the police are themselves bushmen of consequence, it is largely on account of the black trackers that the fear of the law remains alive in the remoter bush and deserts. The best trackers are brought straight from the bush—from the half-savage tribes on the other side of the frontiers—arriving young, fresh, eager, proud of the distinction. A reservation-born blackfellow is of small account in this respect; and a servant of the towns—a wretched hanger-on of civilization—is of no very considerable account at all. It is a

THE BEST TRACKERS ARE BROUGHT STRAIGHT FROM THE BUSH

curious fact that a few years of the provender and idleness of the missions (reservations) dull a blackfellow's singular faculties beyond effective employment. Perceptions so delicate speedily fail in disuse and are not easily brought again to their first efficiency. They demand continuous employment, they must be cherished and exercised—like the mastery of some artistic technique—if their capacity for the most subtle accomplishments is to be preserved. It is even said that the edge is taken off a blackfellow's cunning by protracted police-station life. To be kept keen and fit he is best maintained with his tribe in the bush and fetched out only when occasion requires his services.

Nothing could more significantly indicate the sensitive quality of the tracker's genius.

Back of a capable black tracker's cunning is a savage delight in the man-hunt—a bestial tirelessness, too, which must appall the wretched fugitive who is aware of the fateful manner of the pursuit. A tracker of the Kimberley, for example, led his trooper a remarkable chase after a horse-stealer, escaped from jail in New South Wales to the northwestern wilds. "There was absolutely no real rest," says the trooper, "night or day." It was bad country—the ranges and their neighborhood: a deal of wild and stony ground, which takes meager impressions of the passage of a traveler. And confusing rains fell. Occasionally the tracker was almost on the heels of the fugitive. At times, baffled, he lagged a week and more behind. For days on end in the ranges the ground was so difficult for the tracker that progress was at the rate of less than a mile an hour. When the tracks were lost the blackfellow

ran the country like a bloodhound until he had picked them up. Once the fugitive himself came to desperate straits for water: the tracker made out that he was lost and exhausted—that he had stumbled, fallen, scraped moist mud from a dried-out "soak" with which to rub himself and cool his skin in that extremity of thirst and weariness. The fugitive was taken *at the end of a chase of fifty-six days*, during which time, according to the report of the trooper, the blackfellow had "tracked this man every yard of the way" he went.

"For God's sake," said the exhausted wretch, "don't put more chains on me than you can help!"

A blackfellow will readily identify the tracks of an acquaintance—a slight acquaintance, it may be—white or black, whom he has encountered, perhaps, no more than at occasional intervals. It seems that his memory is as a matter of course accustomed to catch and retain impressions of footprints as well as of features. The imprint of a man's foot is as considerably a feature of his identity as the shape of his nose. Reasoning from a stranger's tracks, a rarely clever blackfellow will in a surprising measure be able to describe the physical characteristics of the man—weight, height, peculiarities of gait, deformities of the legs, like bow-legs and knock-knees. He will know, perhaps, his physical condition. Was he hungry? Was he thirsty? Was he weakening? Was he going strong? And more than that: it may be that the tracker will be able to infer the mood of the man—whether downcast or blithe—and whether his progress was confident or furtive. And what is the character of the fugitive? Is he a determined fellow? Is he a coward? Upon

reflection it will appear that all these details of physique, mood, character, and physical condition, however slight the indications may be, do inevitably communicate themselves to a man's footprints; and it is reasonably conceivable that they will disclose themselves to a savage genius who has from his earliest years specialized in this subtle learning of the open.

In the criminal courts of the back-blocks, a native witness's identification of the tracks of the accused, generally speaking, has much the same credibility as the evidence of an eye-witness.

"You savvy this fellow?"

"I savvy this fellow all right."

"You savvy tracks make-um by this fellow?"

"I savvy tracks him bin make, all right."

It is conclusive.

XXI

LORE OF THE DESERT PLACES

"I RECALL," said the Australian, "a typically obscure trace: a few grains of sand, fallen from a fugitive's bare foot on a flat stone of a stretch of stony country. Nobody in the world but a blackfellow would have observed them. And had a white bushman done so he would not have caught the significance of them—would not have had the wit to comprehend that *those grains of sand were out of place* and could mean only one thing. And that's the secret of the craft—the significance of things that are out of place. You see, the tracker went straight ahead—swiftly, too—on the trail of that displaced dust. It was quite enough. I recall another rather remarkable instance. I saw a blackfellow track a chap through the timber-bush at a canter by means of the color of the leaves—the difference in light and shadow. It was like a path through the snow on a winter's afternoon at Home. But *I* couldn't see anything. And I recall another bit of good work. A tracker I know, pursuing two men, only one of whom was wanted, came at last to a point where the two rogues had separated. It was a clever dodge. The tracker could find no fair impression of a foot on that hard ground. A bushman would

have been balked for a bit—would have scrambled about and lost time. But the nigger followed the right man. How? By identifying the ashes of his first camp-fire. He happened to know how that particular chap made a fire."

"Small hope for the outlaw!"

"Dogs on the scent. And a devilish willing pack. Yet there is no mystery. The exploits of the trackers proceed from the keenest sort of observation and a shocking cunning in inference. When the nigger points out the little disturbances of earth and stones and leaves—when he fairly puts his finger on them—all the magic goes out of the performance."

"Plain as day," said Jerry.

"Ah, yes. You jolly well want to kick yourself, you know, for being mystified at all."

"If you make a study of footprints," said Jerry, "you find that they're all different — like finger-prints. I reckon there never were two men's tracks anywhere near exactly alike. But take a hoof-mark. That's a bit more puzzling. Yet a good black tracker can look at the track of a horse — the depth, you know, and the length of stride—and tell you just about how much he weighs, and how many hands high he is, and where he was shod. If he knows a horse he can easily pick the track from the trampled ground around a water-hole. Once," he went on, proceeding to the tale of the black tracker and the distant trooper, "two troopers, out on patrol with their trackers, met in the bush and traveled a day together. Next morning they parted. One went due east and the other a little to the east of south. It was a big angle. Well, now, when the first trooper had ridden five days from that point,

his tracker told him, all at once, that the second trooper was at the station to which they were themselves bound. The trooper laughed at him. You see, that *couldn't* be so. It was preposterous. The men had been riding almost at right angles for five days. The tracker must be a fool—a silly boaster. But the tracker was right. For some reason or other the second trooper had changed his course, and the blackfellow had picked up the track. And here's the point: he had seen that trooper's horse only once before in his life, and he wasn't balked by the fact that the trooper *ought to have been* a good many miles away."

"These most entertaining tales," said I, "have chiefly to do with the tracking of white men by blackfellows. Are the native blacks able to elude the trackers?"

"No fear!" Jerry laughed.

"Doubtless they oppose cunning with cunning?"

"Ah, yes," replied the Australian. "But set a thief to catch a thief, you know. I recall an instance of the sort. In the McDonnell Ranges, north of Oodnadatta, a miner returning to his camp, one night, found that he had been robbed of his supplies. His only clue was this: that on the previous evening a lubra [blackwoman] had asked for tobacco, and that, later, when the miner was going toward the bush for firewood, he had caught sight of a spear in the scrub, followed, presently, by the merest glimpse of a vanishing naked black. He could not blame the theft to the woman. Nor could he identify the blackfellow with the spear. Moreover, the thieves had swept the camp with boughs, to obliterate their tracks, with blackfellow's cunning, and had

dragged the boughs after them when they departed. As there were hundreds of blacks in the neighborhood, seemed to be a hopeless case. The trail of the sh was plain. It led to a point where the ground was all tracked up by blacks. And that was the end of it. Two trackers from the nearest police-station, however, went over the ground, discovering at last the fair print of a great toe. 'Oeera!' they said. And they took up Oeera's trail from the meeting-place. It led into the bush, where it was joined by the tracks of a woman, which the trackers instantly identified as the tracks of Nangeena, Oeera's lubra. Eventually the two were taken together in the ranges. Oeera confessed—and blamed the woman."

"It is quite true," Jerry observed, "that a first-class tracker, back in the bush, will know the foot-prints of every man and woman in his district. That's his business."

"A rogue's gallery in his memory."

"Oh, rogues and all!"

"In this case," said the Australian, "the trackers were intimately acquainted with the conformation of Oeera's great toe. There *is* some mystery in all this business," he went on, presently. "A white man cannot always comprehend the whole course of the tracker's deductions from the traces he observes. And there are times when the tracker himself cannot explain them. You have seen a dog come to the end of the scent?—stop, lift his nozzle, circle bewildered, whimper, and at last dash away with certainty. I do not maintain, of course, that a tracker has a hound's sense of smell, which would be highly absurd; but his behavior occasionally suggests a hound—even resembling the inspiration

of what is called instinct. And I will give you an extraordinary case. There are many cases. This one will try your credulity. Briefly, then, a black tracker, on the trail of a lost child, came to a point where he was baffled. Presently he picked up the track again. It was plain. It led, let us say, to the right. But the tracker would not follow it. Instead, he pointed to a clump of bush, almost sharply to the left, and said that the child would be found there. And there the kiddie was, sure enough—tuckered out and sound asleep. I don't know how the tracker divined it. Possibly he could not himself explain. There was reason in the process, of course. But by what steps—reasoning from point to point—did the tracker arrive at the deduction?"

"There is nothing for it," I commented, "but to swallow that story whole."

"Nothing whatsoever."

"It does not admit," said I, "of elucidat .."

"There are many mysteries," said the Australian. "It would be a dull world if there were not. I may add," said he, "that a tracker is at his best when he follows a lost child. There is desperate need of haste. It inspires him. And perhaps he leaps to his deductions without being conscious of any intermediate reasoning."

There were other tales—thrilling, mystifying tales. And the moon rose, swollen and red, out of a lake and mist of its own light. "If you think of the way these trackers are bred, away out there in the deserts and bush," said Jerry, "you will begin to understand why they are so astonishingly crafty. I reckon they learn their cunning in the hunt for food. A

little black kiddie fends for himself. Tracks are what concern him. He plays tracks. He's taught tracks. Tracks are his Three R's. He wants food for himself—food for his elders, too. What food he gets he must track. It is scarce. He must be cunning and diligent. And the desert animals are small—rats, snakes, frogs, bugs, bandicoot, caterpillars, grubs, lizards. Even the wallaby are not large. A little black kiddie lives with the women for a while. And then he goes to the men. The more food he can find, of course, the more praise he deserves, and the better man he is. It isn't surprising, after all, that a tracker can distinguish one footprint from another and follow a human track. A blackfellow who must be able to track a rat over hard ground or starve—who can see the track of a bush mouse and know at a glance whether it is fresh enough to follow or not—ought to be able to track a man. Why, when you come to think of it, a human footprint is the biggest track that comes within his experience. It's like big type. He *ought* to be able to read it. It isn't *that* sort of thing that puzzles *me*."

It was left to us to infer that something of a dark and mysterious character did very much bewilder him.

"What does puzzle you?" I inquired, curiosity inflamed.

"Out in the bush," said Jerry, "you come across a good many half-caste children."

It was surely no mystery!

"Jolly little shavers, too," he added, smiling, "blue-eyed and as fat as butter."

"What of that?"

"Well," Jerry replied, "nobody ever saw a half-

caste adult with a tribe in the bush. Now—*what becomes of all those jolly little blue-eyed shavers?*"

It was broad moonlight. The world was like a warm, dry room. No night-wind troubled us. And there was no sound—neither twitter nor buzz of life. Presently Jerry began a low singsong recitative from the verse of that Henry Lawson whom the bushmen understand and love:

I've humped my swag to Bawley plain, and further out and on
I've boiled my billy by the Gulf, and boiled it by the Swan—
I've thirsted in dry lignum swamps, and thirsted on the sand,
And eked the fire with camel-dung in Never-Never Land.

We looked up at the pale stars from the white, still, comfortable waste. And we were glad that our long path had led us to this night in the wide Australian open.

Shriveled leather, rusty buckles, and the rot is in our knuckles,
Scorched for months upon the pommel while the brittle rein hung free;
Shrunken eyes that once were lighted with fresh boyhood, dull and blighted—
And the sores upon our eyelids are unpleasant sights to see.
And our hair is thin and dying from the ends with too long lying
In the night-dews on the ashes of the Dry Countree.

No, you needn't fear the blacks on the Never-Never tracks—
For the Myall in his freedom's an uncommon sight to see;
Oh, we do not stick at trifles—and the trackers sneak their rifles,
And go strolling in the gloaming while the sergeant's yarning free:
'Round the Myalls creep the trackers—there's a sound like firing crackers;
And—*the blacks are getting scarcer in the Dry Countree!*

"I say," Jerry demanded, breaking off, "what about that camel?"

"What camel?"

Jerry chuckled.

"If I had no ambition for that young camel beyond his pleasure in life," said I, positively, "I should certainly shoot him for his own sake."

And we fell asleep.

Next day we turned our faces toward Coolgardie, the railroad, the shabby little Goldfield Express, and Perth. We came with regret to the last amazing day of this midsummer drylands riding. It was a waste place—wide, parched, empty—yet it charmed us, with its color and isolation, and many singular aspects, as any desert will, and we wished we were riding east into the midst of it, where the savage life of the land is, rather than turning tamely to the dead town of Coolgardie. It was hot. It was still. Yet a hot wind blew in rare, bewildering gusts. The touch of dust burned like sparks of fire. We traveled an oven of the world. There was a coppery haze, as though the impalpable particles of the air were incandescent and visible; and sky and scrub and earth were all aglow—molten blue and green and red. In contact with the hot sand the air went mad. It seemed to be streaked and honeycombed. We fancied that we rode from areas of relief into streaming currents and still pockets of heat. Those extraordinary atmospheric conditions which break in cyclones were here operating multitudinously and in miniature to raise a host of little whirlwinds. It was an astounding spectacle, that blazing red expanse and its thousand little dusty tempests circling and

darting far and near. They went whirling past, enveloping us, screaming under the feet of our discouraged beasts; and far away, swirling and swelling in the last places we could see, they raised a dust like the smoke of a forest fire.

XXII

SYDNEY TO QUEENSLAND

IN Perth, once more, we took passage for Adelaide, of South Australia, meaning to go thence by rail to Melbourne and Sydney. No railroad connected the west with the east. The Transcontinental was then building across the drylands from Adelaide to Kalgoorlie. To pass from Western Australia to Sydney Side, we took ship at Freemantle, rounded Cape Leeuwin, crossed the turbulent Australian Bight, and ran up St. Vincent Gulf to Adelaide. Melbourne and Sydney are not for description in this narrative of our mild progress of the Australian byways. Our wishes lay beyond; and presently—we had meantime fallen in with the verses of that Australian poet of the outlands whom Jerry had quoted—they fixed themselves imperatively upon the coach-roads of Queensland. Sydney was hot, and lacked the compensations of the open—intolerable even to the patient travelers that we were. We who had with genuine delight been blistered in the dusty willy-willies of the Western Australian drylands now heartily wished ourselves an escape from the glistening walls and pavements: nor—so aggressive and terrible was the punishment of the time—could we endure to contemplate an-

other day of dispirited behavior or challenge again the heat and exasperating white sunlight. A lovely, enlivening town, truly—given greatly to pleasure, too, in the favorable seasons, and more amply provided with fields and beaches and sheltered salt water than any city that I know of: yet now dull and wretched in a suffocating midsummer weather, the people indoors, languishing without heart. A hot wind blew from the west. It came from the way of the drylands. It stifled the town—an occasional midsummer visitation of distress. It would presently switch to the south (said they). A southerly buster would blow—a Sydney brickfielder; and then we should know a rare thing, worth coming all these miles to see (said they), and worth telling about, too, when winds of consequence blew elsewhere in the world: a swiftly falling temperature, a change of thirty degrees, perhaps, with a great blast of weather and a cloud and swirl of fine dust to amaze us beyond the sand-storm of the African deserts.

Quite so: but all at once, then, a shilling copy of the *Popular Verses* of Henry Lawson, that poet of the Australian bush, caught us off our feet. We read "The Ballad of the Rouseabout." We read "The Boss Over the Board." We read "The Song of the Old Bullock-Driver." And we read "The Lights of Cobb and Co." And we strapped our luggage, in haste to be gone upon this new business; and we called for the bill, and we harried the porters, and we were presently thanking God for the pleasure of exercising our irresponsibility, the while we rattled out of Sydney station, bound north to the bush and long roads of mid-Queensland—the wool-track and the irresistible outlands, the wind

and odors and small adventures of the far-away open places.

Fire lighted—on the table a meal for sleepy men—
A lantern in the stable—a jingle now and then—
The mail-coach looming darkly by light of moon and star—
The growl of sleepy voices—a candle in the bar—
A stumble in the passage, of folk with wits abroad—
A swear-word from a bedroom—the shout of "All aboard!"
"Tchk-tchk! Git up!" "Hold fast, there!" and down the range we go!
Five hundred miles of scattered camps will watch for Cobb and Co.

Old coaching-towns already decaying for their sins;
Uncounted Half-Way Houses and scores of Ten-Mile Inns;
The riders from the stations by lonely granite peaks;
The blackboy, for the shepherds on sheep and cattle creeks;
The roaring camps of Gulong and many a Diggers' Rest;
The diggers on the Lachlan; the huts of Furthest West:
Some twenty thousand exiles, who sailed for weal or woe,
The bravest hearts of twenty lands, will wait for Cobb and Co.

. . . . . .

The roads are rare to travel, and life seems all complete:
The grind of wheels on gravel, the trot of horses' feet—
The trot, trot, trot, and canter, as down the spur we go—
The green sweeps to horizons blue that call for Cobb and Co.

XXIII

BOOKED THROUGH

AT half past three of a raw Queensland morning the 'ostler of the inn knocked us up for the Royal Mail. A tap on the door, and a surly whisper, breathing through the keyhole, with reluctant discretion, "Coach below, sir!" The warning ran into the "Aouw!" of a creaky yawn. Tap-tap next door. A snort in surprisingly prompt response. Tap-tap across the hall. A grumble. It was enough for the 'ostler. He tiptoed down the corridor upon his yawning business. Tap-tap down the corridor. No answer. Tap-tap-tap-tap-*tap*—peremptorily—down the corridor. A growl and a wicked sputter of rage. "I s'y, sir!" the 'ostler complained, deeply injured, expressing his resentment with colonial candor, "coach below, sir, gor blime me, sir! W'yke up, sir—gor blime it!" A muffled outburst of anathema indicated that the prospective passenger had heard and would attend. No more tapping. Four of us, obviously, were for the road that day. Yawns, then, next door. Yawns and sighs across the hall. Yawns and a smothered rumble of growling down the corridor. When, presently, we tiptoed past the gentleman-jackaroo's door, the breathings of that young English exquisite's slumber

disclosed that he, at any rate, was not bound on to the 'prentice labor of his station. Snores resounded from the corner room—snores of such a downright and abandoned character that they could proceed from nobody but the drunken horse-breaker. And they came like the music of good news: the drunken horse-breaker, too, was remaining, and his luggage of contentious conversation. The trooper was ahorse, the shearer was awheel, the swagmen—two weathered old mates—were afoot; and in the sleepy dawn we recalled nobody else—except the young lady who had until midnight executed "The Robin's Return" on the inn piano with exact precision.

Departure was appointed for four o'clock. It lacked twenty minutes of the hour. In the yard below, the coach, a great rattletrap, already bulky with the mail, was drawn up and drearily waiting. "'Ave yer tucker, sir," the 'ostler whispered, making a mystery of the thing, like a tip on a horse-race, "an' 'ave it in a 'urry."

"Our—tucker?"

"Breakfus', sir. 'E don't del'y, sir, w'en 'e's goin' through."

A black night pressed in upon the pallid light of an overhead lantern which projected into the yard from the lintel of the public-room door. A yawning coachman, wrapped to the ears against the foggy weather, stood under the lamp, whip in hand, his fat legs spread wide, as if cunningly prepared against the accident of his falling asleep, where he stood, and toppling over. And the coach, too, which was tilted a bit, having fallen into that posture, apparently, in a cat-nap, seemed to have kept late hours

and to have been turned out of quarters, a disreputable slumber cut short, without time to wash its face. The horses were dejected and sleepy A sleepy coach-boy held the heads of the drooping leaders. He was sound asleep, indeed, with his face against the shoulder of the near horse, and his bare legs, stiffened like the legs of a tripod, of which the horse may be supposed to have formed the third, inclined in a way to hold him upright. Observing the wretched state of men and beasts, we yawned, and rubbed our eyes, and yawned and yawned again. And the 'ostler yawned, and the coachman yawned, and the horses seemed imminently about to yawn, and the coach-boy, awakened by this disturbance of yawning, yawned, too, and so capaciously, for one of his age and stature, that we fancied his little jaws would stick fast at the extremity of their width and require the immediate services of a physician to restore them. But nothing of the sort happened: the coach-boy was doubtless accustomed to managing his sturdy little jaws at that early hour of the morning; and having stretched them to their amazing capacity, and having maintained them in that situation until his satisfaction was complete, he snapped them shut, without any difficulty whatsoever, and put his face down again, and once more fell sound asleep.

In the coffee-room, in a meager, smoky lamplight, we found a stout, florid man nodding over ham and eggs, while he breakfasted in company with a rusty old fellow with a long gray beard.

"Booked through?" says the florid man, waking up.

"Booked through."

"Humph!" growled the other.

It seemed they were surly fellows. And we were surly, too. A hundred miles of the hospitality of the coach was a shocking prospect at that dispiriting hour.

These were to be our fellow-passengers of the long road of that day: the drowsy florid man and the rusty old fellow with the gray beard; and promising folk they were, indeed, to travel intimately with, though now melancholy and selfish with the need of being abroad from warm beds before dawn. The rusty old fellow, a limp, broad-brimmed black hat drawn to his ears, was lean and of a cadaverous pallor, clad in a threadbare black greatcoat, buttoned under his beard, collar turned up, his neck incredibly long and scrawny and limber, so that when he moved his head it was like the grotesque nodding of a toy manikin. He attended to his porridge with that selfsame energy and anxious economy of time which (we learned before the day was out) had made him rich in lands and sheep and cattle; and when he had smacked his gray lips for the last time, he was not only comfortably furnished for the journey, but impatient with the little leisure that remained, which he could not by any means turn to remunerative account. The florid man was in a pitiably sleepy way. He could not rouse himself—try as he would, with all the flabby will that he had. He nodded and started and blinked and shook himself, and he sighed and yawned, and coughed in a sudden, loud, determined way, as though now, at last, he was wide awake and master of his faculties; but he could not for the life of him command an

interval of unblinking attention to the ham and eggs, an interval sufficient to make his heroic effort to devour them in the least worth while. Indeed, we saw him fall asleep with his fork midway from the plate—and start awake, then, before he had nodded twice, and stare at the morsel, and slowly recognize it as something with which he had once been importantly concerned, and swiftly dispose of it in a snap and a gulp, and nod helplessly off to sleep again. He was sound asleep, the delectable platter close to his florid countenance, poor chap—caught unready and sheepish—when the 'ostler came to warn us to the coach.

A spare, jockey-like little man, this 'ostler: the smell of the stable enveloped him, to be sure; and he had the secretive, obsequious habit of the paddock tout. Every word that he uttered, in the company of his betters, was let drop, in seclusion, like information of consequence, not to be spread abroad among the clods and the fools of the neighborhood, who would surely damage the issue, but to be kept close, with proper cunning, for employment to advantage the knowing. Late of the night before, on the quiet, withdrawn from the loquacious presence of the shearer and the drunken horse-breaker, we had been informed that five points of rain had fallen to the west of us. We must bend our ears to catch this; and though, at first, five points of rain to the west of us seemed to be a matter of no grave moment, when we had received the 'ostler's glance, and been subjected to his gradual wink, we were on the point of exclaiming, "You don't mean to say so!" and conceiving ourselves put in possession of information which with a little capital might father a most prof-

itable speculation. A vastly entertaining fellow: I would not forget him—an amiable rascal, no doubt. And now he whispered the news that it was four o'clock—breathed it with a wink so sly, so still, so subtly insinuating the importance of the communication, that had we been bushrangers of the old days, challenging capture in town, for mere sport of the hazard, and had the 'ostler been the bush-telegraph, and had the police been upon us, and had the locality been infinitely perilous, we could not have been more surely convinced of the wisdom of escaping to the night and the open road by way of the coffee-room door. Move we did, in response to the 'ostler's dark suggestion, somewhat in advance of the florid man and the rusty old fellow with the long gray beard; and our expedition gave us some small advantage, after all, as the 'ostler had intended: we tumbled into the black interior of the rattletrap coach and were in time to seize the most comfortable places.

"Right-o?" called the fat coachman from the box.

"Right-o!" yawned the florid man.

"Right-o!" snapped the rusty old fellow.

"Right-o!" agreed we.

"Right-o, sonny!" said the coachman to the coach-boy.

And we were instantly on the jump It was thrilling. Expectation delighted us.

XXIV

THE KING'S HIGHWAY

WELL, now, the coach-boy, all awake and lively, dropped the heads of the leaders, leaped to the saddle of his hack, and galloped off into the dark, bound on, in smart haste, as a diminishing clatter of hoofs indicated, to the first post-change, there to round up fresh horses for the stage beyond. And the coach-horses, having shaken themselves awake in answer to the fat coachman's soft "Gid-ap, you beauties!" drew away from the circle of misty lantern-light, turned out of the inn-yard, and broke into a gallop on the black road. It was thick dark. There were no stars: there were no lighted windows. The little town was sound asleep. We turned a corner, jumped a ditch, careened down a hill, rattled over a bridge, rolled into the bush, and sped along, swaying and jolting; and all this while (until our searching fingers found something to grasp)—though the fat coachman was merrily caroling "I Married Her on the Downs" to what must have been the first faint flush of dawn—all this while we were tumbled about in the dark, in a fashion to pain and irritate us, and had no heart, not one of our tumultuous company, to make a joke of our misery, but were all melancholy and grim. The expecta-

tion of Pickwickian adventure vanished. A grave situation all at once confronted us. It could not be made light of: there was no laughing it away—no transforming it, with a touch of the imagination, into an experience of novelty and delight, in the way of jocular travelers who have learned how to deal with the various discomforts of the road. It was to be faced with what measure of courage we could command; and—in literal terms—it was a terrifying prospect. There was no turning back: a hundred miles of that bruising road lay ahead in the empty bushlands and all the slow hours of the inimical day we had begun, dark of dawn to dark of night—with other days of the back-block coaching-roads immediately impending; and the Royal Mail, under contract to perform the incredible feat, would accomplish its hundred miles, weather permitting, no matter to what desperate state of black-and-blue exhaustion the bounden duty of transferring His Majesty's mail from place to place without interruption might reduce idle travelers from overseas.

Now the 'ostler's warning—his wink and whisper—seemed no burlesque of significance.

"'E don't del'y, sir," says the 'ostler, "w'en 'e's goin' through."

New Australian railroads are building and projected—government undertakings: there is a lusty boasting of spurs and connecting lines and transcontinentals, all about to be, and sure to be, indeed, in fulfilment of the fine Australian ambition to be progressive and ultimately wealthy and great; but in these raw times, with a new wave of pioneering gathering impulse and a wide sweep, eighteen thousand miles of railroad inadequately serve a populous

little Southeast (which is provided out of proportion) and an amazingly vast territory of settled outlands. Whom the saucy *Sydney Bulletin* calls the squatocracy of the land, being bound from great comfortable estates to the markets and fashionable pleasures of Sydney and Melbourne, in the seasons for town, may travel the intervals of highway in equipages of distinction, alone and aloof; but the selector and small farmer take the Royal Mail as a matter of course, with the commercial traveler, the wool-buyer, the horse-trader, and the schoolmarm, or book places with a rival, the "Democrat," the "Lively Billy," or the "Ti underbolt." A dashing fellow, in the coaching way, has his privileges in the coaching country, as of old: he may strut the inn-yards, hobnob with consequential passengers over the bars, chuck the maids under the chin, curse the 'ostlers—precisely as though he had no real substance at all, but lived, at intervals, in the chapters of some old tale of the highroad. Sometimes the journeys are of tedious length—out from the Kimberley, the mulga and red sand of the West, the saltlands of upper South Australia, the back-blocks of New South Wales, the remoter Queensland bush: a day and a half, a week, a fortnight or two, in ochre heat, in crisp, sparkling weather, as it may chance, across the deserts, over the frosty ranges, perilously through the flooded bush. To the north and west of us, where we tumbled along in the dark, the rains were down: the rivers were overflowed, the bush was under water, the roads of the uplands were hub-deep, the mails were ten days late; and we had news of a Royal Mail mired between stages, travelers in the trees, the start of a rescue expedition.

THE ROYAL MAIL CROSSING A FORD

It was tolerable, presently: our muscles warmed to the emergency, and we swayed in unison to the dip of the road, and cushioned ourselves, the one with the other, and braced, with new cunning, against the jolt and swing of the coach, and were far too clever to rise quite to the roof or alight with violence. It was still black dark; and the four horses were still at a clattering, jingling gallop, and the fat coachman, perched high outside, with the sacks of mail, still sang "I Married Her on the Downs." The stout, florid man was asleep—limp and soft and heavy: so that, as it were, his presence worked both ways, being a great weight to receive, but a comfortable bulk to fall against; and the rusty old fellow with the gray beard, awake and stiff and angular (he was really rather unsportsman-like with his elbows), brooded upon his own concerns, silent in the shadows. By and by a splash of rosy light, far beyond the contorted black shapes and tufted tops of the bush, heartened us with the promise of dawn. And the dawn came radiant—crimson color, yellowing fast, spreading wide and high, determined, at last, in the deep blue of a fine Queensland day. A laughing-jackass jeered at us from the tuft of a bottle-tree, and the cockatoos screamed their indignation, and fluttered and scolded, as though the disturbance our passage created were a nuisance the law should put down, and a dingo slunk into the depths of the Brigalow scrub, with scared backward glances, and two wallaby, in hurried hops, gave us the road, and a flock of emu, feeding in a grassy space, went striding and flopping to seclusion. The florid man rubbed the last of the sleep out of his eyes and shook himself into an aspect most genial,

smiling like a red August moon; and the rusty old fellow, without wrinkling his pallid face, or twinkling his deep-set, bleared little eyes, or unbending his attitude, managed to convey to us, when he remarked that it would be a fair day, that his disposition was amiable and his inclination toward companionable behavior of the best.

It was broad day when we approached the first post-change. Warm, yellow sunlight, a fine abundance of it, flooded the dusty road and flecked the open reaches of the bush. At that moment there was a stirring on the floor of the coach—the stirring of a small, living body, to be sure, earnestly endeavoring to emerge from under the rear seat, and in somewhat wrathful impatience with a tangled barrier of feet and legs. Was it profanity we heard?—or a more or less innocent wheeze of angry breath? I recalled then that a rumpled horse-blanket had occupied the rear seat, in the dark of our departure from the inn, which seemed to enfold a great leg of mutton or a small shoulder of beef; and as the rear seat was no place at all for either a shoulder of beef or a leg of mutton, we had tumbled it to the floor, blanket and all, and kicked it out of the way. With the jouncing of the coach it had persistently returned to trouble our comfort; and we had as persistently heeled it back (with the violence of aggravation) —and the florid man and the rusty fellow had toed it back (so that at times we were engaged in a concerted assault and battery upon it)—to make room for our feet in the space which our feet had lawful title to occupy. And now it turned out to be neither a large leg of mutton nor a small shoulder of beef, but a sullen little half-caste boy,

as sullen as ever I knew, who said that he was the spare-boy, and demanded opportunity for instant exit, else how (says he) could he get into action when the coach drew up at the post-change, now less than a hundred yards ahead? How in the world he had kept asleep through the jolting of the coach and the brutal treatment of our exasperation was not to be explained by any wit that we had; but the mystery of this—which sufficiently entertained us—was fairly dwarfed by the mystery of how he had, in that blind corner, managed to wake up to his duty precisely without another instant to spare.

"Blackfellow blood," the rusty old fellow explained.

"Knows every hump and bump of the road," declared the florid man. "A touch of color, sir."

We went galloping helter-skelter down a long, slow hill. The coach rolled like a ship in a seaway. Here was the last little stretch of the first stage. There was no sparing the beasts. It was a spurt. "Gid-ap!" yelled the fat coachman. "G'long, you beauties!" And he flourished and cracked his whip, like a man with a race to win, in a desperate finish, and halooed, and clucked, and stamped his feet, and shook his ribbons; and the horses, heads down, ears flat, all on the jump, expended the last breath they had to oblige his urgent humor. All at once we drew up short and gasping beside a great bush-paddock, into one corner of which, fenced high and furnished with step-rails, the coach-boy, who had ridden ahead, had already rounded up the relay. There was a fine dash in the thing—in the rush and dust and rearing halt: yet there was nobody to applaud our spirited arrival (the post-

change was deep in the bush)—except the little willy-wagtails and a flock of stupid parrots. A laughing-jackass passed a word or two of comment; but this was in the way of contemptuous criticism—as though we might have done more brilliantly. Smart work, now, you may believe: coachman and coach-boy and half-caste fell upon the horses in a fury of haste, and stripped them and slapped them steaming into the paddock; and the fresh relay was led out and strapped and buckled to the coach—all in a disciplined way, without a waste of seconds. The half-caste boy caught the heads of the leaders; the coachman clambered to the box and gathered up the reins; the coach-boy grasped the mane of his riding-hack, and was away, in puffs of dust, with one foot in the stirrup and a bare leg in the air. "Right-o, sonny!" says the coachman. The half-caste boy dropped the heads of the leaders and came scurrying back. And the whip cracked. "Gid-ap! Wheet, wheet! G'long, you beauties!" The leaders reared; the steady wheel-pair buckled to the labor; and we moved off with a jerk and swung at a gallop into the bush road.

We were the Royal Mail; and the Royal Mail—in the remotest places of all the wide world—moves importantly and with expedition.

"Smart work," says the fat coachman. "We'll go through on time."

In the nick of time we had caught the hapless little half-caste by the scruff of the neck—he was clinging like a monkey between the wheels—and hauled him inboard.

Clear the road for the Royal Mail! The Royal

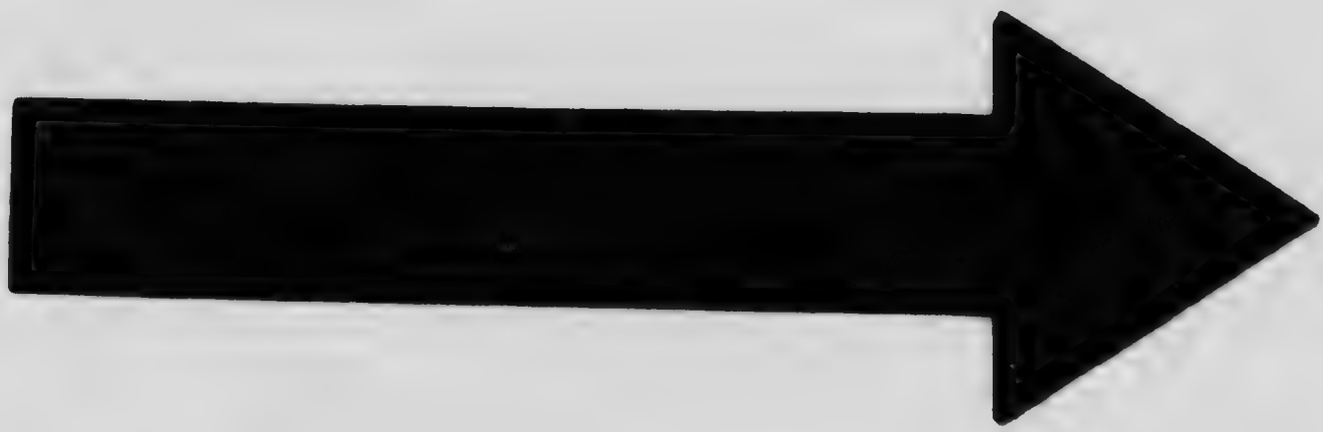
Mail is for ever in haste. It *must* go through. And here is a singular devotion: it takes no account of hardship, small thought of peril, but considers duty. Wherever the Royal Mail penetrates—desert, forest, jungle, ice-field, wild autumn seas—and however transported—dog-team, whaleboat, camel-train, the backs of savages—it goes with its own dignity; and thought of the round world, flashing over the British outlands, in a swift vision, discovers it for ever moving, indomitably, securely, urgently—going through, and doing its level best, with cunning, courage, and prodigal energy, to go through on time. Here were we, in the coaching country of the Australian back-blocks, remote from observation; but smart work was the word for the rattletrap Royal Mail—smart work and a hearty pride in smart work: so that what would have been a dull journey, accomplished with groaning and sighs, had speed been of no consequence, and a moving clock no master, seemed now, so exhilarating was the behavior of the coach, as we galloped into the green lowlands, to promise an acceptable adventure, in the complex nature of a patriotic achievement and a race against time. Subsequently, going north, in these parts, we traveled by other coaches—private enterprises, these, to catch pounds and pence where the Mail was booked up; and our coaches were slovenly, our beasts of poor quality, our passage not hailed and respected, our way a lazy going, with leisure to pause for gossip in the encounters of the road, time to stretch and smoke and talk horseflesh at the post-changes. Invariably, however, the Royal Mail was taken seriously by the folk of the highways and inns—by all creatures, indeed, except the laughing-

jackasses, which, wretched birds, being constitutionally incapable of anything better than jeering cachination, made game of us, and would have ridiculed even the Person of Royalty, traveling the king's own highway!

XXV

"SMOKE IT UP!"

FRESH and eager, the new relay took the road with spirit, to the delight of the fat coachman, who flecked their flanks and ears, to indicate his interest, and whistled encouragement, and chirruped affectionate praise. And in response to these stimulating communications the four snorted and jingled and added something of vigor to what appeared to be a determined endeavor to shake the rattletrap Royal Mail to fragments and scatter the passengers in the dust. "Smoke it up, you beauties!" says the fat coachman; and smoke that road his beauties did—a rolling yellow cloud behind. It seemed we were flying: there was the illusion of breakneck speed, due, no doubt, to the swaying of the coach, which threatened instant disaster, and to the crack of the whip, and to the fat coachman's "Gid-ap!" and to the commotion of hoof-beats; but of course the most decrepit of motor-cars, expending the same measure of effort, would have made a snail of our pretensions. And so galloping, it coming near nine o'clock, we cantered, at last, into a sunlit open. A long lift of road lay ahead, reaching slowly to the crest of a ridge; and there a small figure popped into view, waved a hat against the blue sky beyond,



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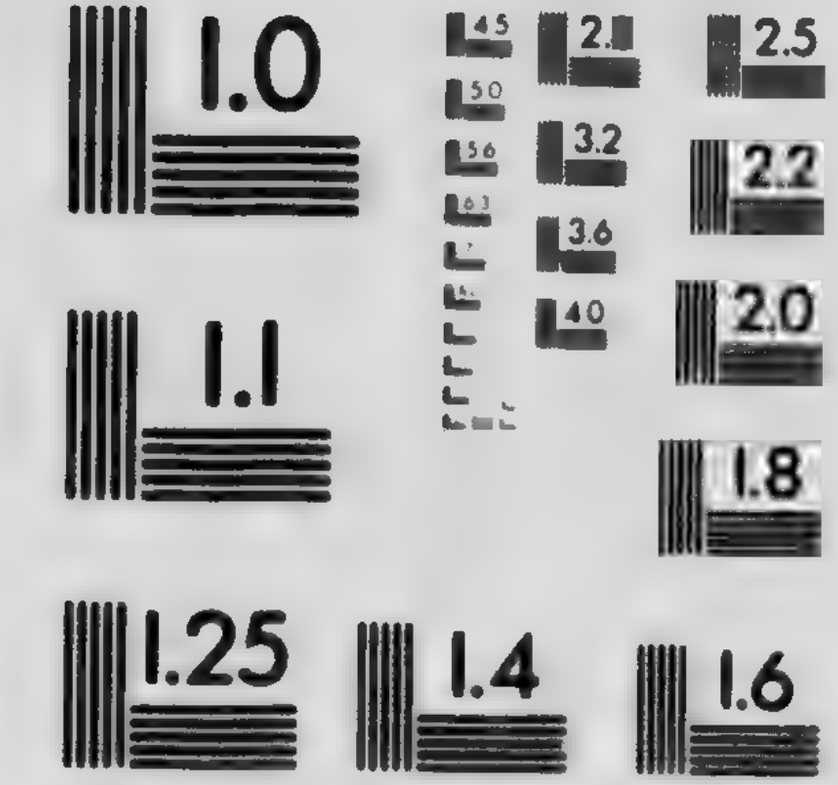

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and vanished over the hill, leaving a spurt of dust to describe the speed of his errand. In consequence of the alertness of this little lookout, when we drew up at the Range House—a bit of shanty, a touch of green paint, and a brilliant flowering vine, alone at the roadside near the edge of the ridge—a breakfast of steak and onions, with fried potatoes and coffee, and with marmalade and toast, was already laid out—the most savory breakfast to be imagined: upon which we fell at once, you may believe, the florid man with exceeding voracity, being now wide awake and capable of exercising his obvious quality as a trencher-man, while the coachman and the coach-boy and the sullen little half-caste took out the exhausted horses and went to breakfast in the kitchen.

"All aboard, gentlemen!" says the coach-boy.

"My word!" puffed the florid man.

We were at a canter in the bush beyond before the florid man had fairly wiped his lips and commanded his indignation; and the fat coachman, his weather eye pleased with the prospect, was singing again—"Flash Jack from Gundagai" and "The Old Bullock Dray." Long after noon, having by this time changed three times more, twice at lonely paddocks in the bush, Twenty Mile Gully and Bottle Tree Creek (there was neither gully nor creek to be seen), and once near the slip-rails and dipping-pen of some wealthy cattle-station, and always with the precision of a drill—the day being now blue and dry and hot and all the bush drowsy in the summer weather—we had leisure to dine at a coaching-inn. It was a mean place, perhaps, but the chief public-house of the day's stage of that highway, and a

proud one: a little yard of gravel and brown grass, a low, long house, with a hot iron roof, a projecting lantern, a post and blistered sign, a deal bar, a talkative landlady, stablemen, and a swarm of house-flies. A stockman, knocking down his cheek—expending his wages, that is, over the deal bar—and now near the end of his cash and welcome—slightly interrupted the somnolence of the time and locality. The dull ebullitions of his orgie evoked no genuine interest (he was a slow-wit in his cups); and the landlady—who might at least have had the grace to contribute a smile to the joy of his holiday—served him listlessly, wishing haste to his spending, it seemed, and himself gone back to the labor of his station. A blacksmith's forge, and a second habitation, with beggarly outbuildings, made a town of the place. And town it was, truly, with a cherished pastime, in the way of all Australian towns, as we confirmed—with another lost hamlet within sporting distance, half-day's reach of a riding-hack: for a manuscript notice, posted in the bar, announced a cricket-match, presently to be played against Dry Creek, and "earnestly requested" all the town "to roll up, for the honor of the town, and team will be picked from the field."

XXVI

A BUTCHER'S PHILOSOPHY

ALL afternoon the road flowed under our reckless wheels. We sped. A gray-green, ragged bush — always a gray-green, ragged bush — swung to the rear and vanished in the dust of our passage. There was the bush poet's blithe "grind of wheels on gravel, the trot of horses' feet—the trot, trot, trot, and canter." It was no fenced, kept highway, but a winding course through the bush—hill, gully, dry watercourse, and flatland—sand, gravel, and black loam; and the bush grew close—an open, grassy, sunlit bush, of box-trees, oak, blackbutt, spotted-gum, stringy-bark, bottle-trees, with patches of thick scrub, which were tangled and dark as a jungle. Our journey was in eight stages, twelve miles to a stage—a matter of ninety-six miles of variable highroad; and as we traveled a coach and four, thirty-two horses, with the coach-boy's four riding-hacks—thirty-six horses in all—drew the Royal Mail that day. Wheelers and leaders came exhausted to the post-changes and were turned out to browse themselves into condition again; they went to their brief labor with a leap, when the fat coachman first cracked his whip, and sweated and snorted and pawed, like race-horses, at the end of

the last dash. Grass-fed beasts (said the fat coachman): they fended for themselves in the paddocks; and they were soft, good for one stage at least—for two stages, most of them—a week. Not that they were beasts of poor quality! My word! we were not to think so! They were beasts of most excellent quality—we could see for ourselves (said the fat coachman); and the standard of that excellence was maintained by occasional purchase and frequent clever trading. As the Mail made three round trips a week, with the best of luck, in the very best weather, the mail contractor, whom the fat coachman served, kept one hundred and sixteen horses in his paddocks and stables, meaning to "get through" with that degree of expedition and regularity which should assure him the goodwill of the countryside and a continuance of the government's favor.

It was an exhilarating thing, now that we had settled to the rumble and jolt of it—thus to travel in the ancient mode, and to catch, here unspoiled and inevitable, the flavor of the long highway. The sky was blue over the road, blue beyond the shaggy tree-tops; and the clatter of hoofs, and the rattle of wheels, and the fat coachman's "Gid-ap, you beauties!" were pleasant sounds to hear, and we made a breeze of our noisy speed and left our dust to trouble others. Post-riders, waiting by the roadside, here and there, mounted when we came cantering into view; and having exchanged a word of the news with the fat coachman, and having taken their small sacks from the little half-caste, they spurred away on their far routes, vanishing in the bush. We passed a selector's primitive home, and got a

stare from his worn wife—hapless woman—and a wave and a shrill cheer from his forlorn little family; and after that we glimpsed the low roof and wide white porches of a cattle-station, established in the midst of its many thousands of green acres of succulent bush, and presently drew up to pass the time of day with the gray, strapping owner, a man of land and social importance, now in condescending company with a swagman, and with the driver of a wool-team, whose many spans of horses were resting at the foot of the hill. At the next post-change we found a bullock team, in charge of a deaf old grandfather and the leanest little grandson that ever wore leggings and spurs—some tons of wool and twenty-four bullocks—the outfit gone into camp for the night, the billy-can boiling, the damper (a scone of flour and water baked in hot ashes) in preparation, the bullocks being unspanned to graze their own fodder; and now, indeed, we could better apprehend the pomp and speed of the Royal Mail: for the bullock team (said the fat coachman) had these nine days past been on the way through the twenty miles that remained of our day's run.

"Gran'fer's so slow," growled the lean little boy, "that I cawn't m'yke out whether 'e's goin' or comin'."

All this time the florid man, a reticent companion, from shyness, I think—he was a Brisbane butcher (said he) and bound out to buy cattle for his stalls—had agreed with whatever was said. "Quite so!" says he. It was a pleasant thing, in the beginning, to find him not too disputatious; but as the day wore along, so intimate was our situation, and so in need

of distracting conversation were we to cut short the rough length of these last hours, we fancied his company would have been more agreeable had he been disposed to contribute a contrary notion or two to feed the languishing discussions. Not once was his caution entrapped. "Quite so!" says he. And, "Quite so!"—with an owlish appearance of wisdom, assumed to indulge us, we complained, his wits being elsewhere, gathering wool of some precious sort, which he would not share with us. It was not that he seemed to have no mind to employ; he seemed rather to have better occupation for his mind than we could provide—price of beef on the hoof, rise and fall of cold-storage mutton, Argentine competition in the British market, the invasion of American refrigerating plants, the establishment of great Queensland tanneries with American capital, and such important matter—and to be engaging his thought so busily that he could not spare the smallest moment of it for the trivial exchanges of the road. "Quite so!" says he. And, "Quite so!"—returning abruptly to distant fields of reflection. We should have thought him churlish had not this queer habit of agreement entertained us with its own perfection—with the hopeful expectation, too, that it would at any moment break in a lusty contention. And at last, moved by the rusty old fellow, the florid man dropped an original comment. In the course of years, a man's business will teach him at least a little of philosophical truth—a little of truth, obtruding again and again, perceived often, confirmed a thousand times, and at last establishing itself, like a fact of the physical universe; and dealing with death, as the Brisbane butcher did, he

had learned something true concerning it, in a general way.

We passed a small mob of sheep, dawdling content through the dust, on the way to the mutton-market.

"For slaughter," said the florid man.

We all of us—the rusty old fellow observed, with a sanctimonious wag, and a doleful sigh, too—are like sheep driven to the slaughter.

"I reckon," the florid man drawled, "that it don't matter very much to the sheep."

Taken deeply, it was profoundest wisdom—the wisdom of the stars. Surely a man will not discover in his own death a complete disaster to himself. It will not matter very much.

It was late in the afternoon when we completed the last stage of the day and cantered with our dust into the little town of our destination. The sun was low, then, and first beginning to swell and flush—the shadows remaining still long and black. All the little scrubbers—the sun-browned, rosy, hearty children of the place—were at play on the green common, after supper, and calling cows in the pastures, and stripped naked and dripping in the swimming-hole, a black pool below the bridge. It was a pastoral village, communicating with the world by coach, far away from any railroad—a gathering of cottages, with picket fences and pretty dooryards, some near covered with a luxuriant flowering vine, and all drawn near the four corners where the general store was, and the saddler's shop, and the blacksmith's forge, and the wheelwright's shed, and the inn and the public-house, and the police-station and the post-

office, with something in the way of a town hall, no doubt, which I have forgotten. Our dash was not diminished, but enlivened with larger importance and new fire, here at the end of the run, where the fat coachman lived. We swung from the highroad at full gallop, the coach on two wheels, the horses sweating and straining—a spirited spectacle for the waiting villagers. And we were boarded in a rush from the common. There were cries of, "Whip behind!" But the fat coachman had more urgent use for his whip than to fleck half a dozen little shavers from the springs and luggage-rack with it: he was cracking it over the heads of the leaders as we rolled into the yard of the inn—but whether to agitate their speed or to restrain their devilish behavior was a mystery for his own enjoyment. And here we drew up, with a last amazing jolt, before a comfortable inn, with spacious porches, all the odors of a waiting table emerging to ease our weariness and entice a good humor to the arrival.

Down came the fat coachman from the box.

"Pleasant trip," said I.

"Not too bad," said he. "I've been as much as ten days coming through."

"In the rains?" said I.

"In a spell of dry weather, once," said he, lightly, "I came through in six hours and forty minutes."

And the coach-boy winked at the half-caste—and the half-caste put his tongue in his cheek.

XXVII

A SKELETON BUSH

NEXT day we coached along — not now aboard the Royal Mail, but in a shabby democrat wagon, a privately operated coach, known as the "Billy Bullet." Near dusk it began to rain. A Queensland shower, this—a swift drenching of the bushlands. Night was now down. It was black dark in the coach. The horses were exhausted to a dispirited trot. And we four passengers were limp. A highroad rough with ruts and stones jounced and shook us. A black wind blew in—chill and wet. And the coach leaked pertinacious little trickles of black rain: so that—here cowering helpless in the like of a dark shower-bath—we had no dry thing upon us. "Gid-ap!" says the coachman. And, "Gid-ap!" And, "Gid-ap!" And nothing came of it: nor had the coachman the least expectation that anything would come of it. But, "Gid-ap!" says he. And, "Gid-ap!" And in this way we rattled and splashed and jolted along toward the refuge of an expected inn. No wise traveler would yield his spirit to these incidents of discomfort, but would employ his imagination—without an abundant measure of which no traveler of any sort should essay a passage of the byways of the world—to withdraw

him from the ills of the time. He would contemplate, to be sure, not the rainy night, not the pains of the road, but the lights and company of the expected inn, and the good green bounty to come to the bushlands of all this dripping misery. And thus we—surveying the grassy, sunlit future of the paddocks: until, ahead in the dark of the road, a point of light, flaring in the midst of a glowing little globe of rain, indicated that Forty Mile Inn was at last within hail. And at Forty Mile Inn, being now cramped and bruised and sodden, we alighted, desiring a share of that refreshment for man and beast, to be had within, which the sign of the place promised belated travelers.

A landlady of uncomely aspect somewhat discouraged our anticipation.

"Coffee-room?" says she, listlessly.

"Coffee-room!"

We had not ordered supper: we had required the superior hospitality of the inn.

In the morning of that day we had come trotting at easy leisure through as drear a stretch of bush as could anywhere be found. All open, like a kept park, this bush was upstanding, perfect in trunk and branch, the grasses fresh and flourishing knee-high, and no scar of fire to be descried; but every tree was dead—as dead as dry bones, and clean and bleached white, like an articulated skeleton. It was a ghastly spectacle. A night passage, in the white light of the moon, would surely make a man's flesh creep—a stark, gray forest, and the rattle and creak of its dry limbs, and the wind wandering past, moaning and whispering and whimpering, as the

wind will, given half a chance to frighten timid folk. It was nothing at all to fancy that a gigantic naturalist had here expressed some eccentric notion—had designed to exhibit to the passengers of that highroad the anatomy of the Queensland bush. We wondered why any settler should work such wide destruction—what wisdom lay in killing all this mighty timber; and we learned, then, from the amiable coachman, that the death of these great trees had been dealt to give the grasses more life—the vitality of all the rain. It was a ring-barked bush (said he). They had cut a broad band of bark from every trunk, near the root, in the Australian way of improving the land; and the leaves had fallen, and the bark had gone to shreds and been blown away—and the trees, like dead men, who ask nothing of the world's bounty, drew no moisture from the ground, needing none, but left it to sustain the grasses for the cattle.

These were not the surely watered and fertile Queensland miles—the comparatively inconsequential fruit-acres and sugar-lands. It was cattle country, and sheep country, too; but hereabouts it was mean land—a perishing land. The good pastures, new and near free, where the stock grows into money (said they), and any young man, with the heart and patience of the fathers, can be wealthy at middle age, like the grayheads of these days—these good places lay deeper north and west, where the frontiers are, with the world lapping out to them, like a tide. Nor near by where then we coached was there any very vast station, but humbler ones, not of the magnitude of the incredible, established estates of the Darling River country, the New

South Wales back-blocks, to which the third generation returns, nowadays, from the English schools and universities, with the natural habit of leisure, and with affectations of a sort to startle the patriarchs—not the million-acre runs, hereabouts, and the ten-mile paddocks, and the three hundred thousand head of stock, and the swarm of herders and boundary-riders and managers and jackaroos, and the racing-stables and jockeys and hunters, and the tutors and music-masters and retainers-in-general. It may be that in the end these amazing holdings will be the material of romance: for the government does not hesitate to seize them and throw them open for what is called closer settlement. At any rate, here was none. The land was for the small selector—blocks of twenty-five hundred acres, which he might have for a shilling an acre, perhaps, or for nothing at all, with the government's blessing to boot.

Prickly-pear troubled the country. It was spreading with the speed and blighting effect of a plague—doubling the area of actual occupation every two years, when thriving unchecked. It had spoiled ten thousand miles (said they); and it had infected twenty million acres—this estimate from a Queensland ranger, whose business had somewhat to do with the pest and who was far too serious a fellow, it seemed, to take a rise out of credulous travelers. "As for mere infection," said he, then, "I reckon eighty million acres would be nearer the truth." I I am unable to swallow such a mouthful of ciphers: the reader may suit his taste and capacity—dropping ciphers when surfeited; but this much is sure, and significant of an appalling arithmetical result:

that in 1910 applications for new prickly-pear selections were accepted by the Queensland government to the extent of 1,308,170 acres. The coachman had a pretty tale to account for the presence of the pear in this alien land. It was imported (said he) by the good lady of a station who was fond of curious plants; and it was kept in a veranda pot, and was nourished and greatly admired, and was transplanted to the yard, and there fenced with care, to keep it safe from the stock. And then it ran away—over the station premises and into the bush. "I *like* this country," said that prickly-pear, according to the coachman's story; "and I reckon I'll *settle* here—and *stay*." And now they curse it, and slash it, and burn it, and poison it with arsenic and soda; but it thrives, in spite of them, and delights in its adopted country.

"Just been a Yankee over here to poison the pear," said the coachman, "by flowing a heavy gas through the bush."

"Did the gas kill the pear?"

"Ah, yes, and everything else," said the coachman. "Wheet, wheet! G'long, you!"

XXVIII

FORTY MILE INN

WE had picked up a jackaroo, bound out from his station to the pleasures of Sydney and Melbourne—for a whack at life (said he), and a jolly smart whack, too! We had taken in a drover's boy, returning homesick to his mother. We had visited a blackfellow's mission (reservation) and run a losing race against the rain. And now we had fallen into disreputable lodgings, as, in the coaching country, travelers will. It is all as it used to be. No man can say that he will be refreshed in the parlor of one inn and lie the night in No. 4 of another: nor is any journey come safely to its end, indeed, until the horses are drawn up in the lighted yard of the last inn of all. A mishap in the dark—a broken horse, a mired wheel, the accident of rain—and let travelers look out for obscure wayside taverns and queer lodgings. A glimpse of the bar of this low public-house—the smoky lamplight and drear board walls and shelves—disheartened us in respect to the quality of its entertainment. At the moment of our arrival three stockmen were in the last rumble of a roar of laughter; and a barmaid, with her head furiously back, was shrilling a very naughty complaint of some indelicacy they had

dropped—a word or two, perhaps, beyond the usual license. By this the stockmen were silenced and abashed, like mischievous children, even before a bleared little stable-boy had time to gather up our dripping luggage, or the landlady had bidden us follow to the parlor: whereupon the flash barmaid's anger, at once appeased by the blushes and stricken behavior of the three stockmen, ran into a scream of merriment more terrible than her rage. And here, then, it was plain, was no good Queensland inn, to put up coaching-folk, but a naked back-block pot-house, kept to serve the like of stockmen and shearers, in the season of spending (which was not now), who must find pleasure in their cups, or have no pleasure, at all to their liking, to reward their labor.

We followed the landlady, with the bleared little stable-boy at our heels, to a musty parlor, where she lighted candles for us, and opened the door to an adjoining dormitory chamber furnished with several beds—shabby, suspicious characters, every one of them. A board partition, with cracks and gaps and knot-holes, was designed to separate our repose from the hilarity of the bar. There was a bed for each of us, however; and a bed for the young jackaroo, who was belated with us; and a bed for the diminutive drover, whom we had picked up in the happier hours of that day; and there was a last bed, leaning in a corner, on doubtful legs, for the next wretched traveler whom the rainy night should blow in. He had already blown in, it seemed: we heard him, then, in the bar, demanding lodgings, and demanding supper, and demanding an 'ostler to stable his horse; and we fancied him a harsh fellow —a man in pugnacious ill humor with being caught

houseless on the deep black road. Had there been less to complain of, we should have been bitter with it all; but so forlorn was our state and expectation, in this mean pot-house, that when the young jackaroo grinned, and the little drover chuckled, we must break into laughter with them. Some phrases of drunken melody followed upon our mirth. They flowed easily in from the bar by way of the cracks and knot-holes. And the jackaroo explained that these snatches of song described Flash Jack from Gundagai as *'avin' shore at big Willandra, an' shore at Tilberoo, an' once 'e drew 'is blades, me boys, upon the famed Barco*—which was something more to laugh at, and promised a considerable amusement for the later hours.

All dry, at last, and a supper of hot mutton-pie being by this time laid in the parlor, we found something to cheer us, but not in the acquaintance of the new guest, who was a long, scowling, hairy man, and gobbled up his pie, and gulped down his tea, without saying a gracious word, and forthwith disappeared to the veranda. Our landlady attended. She had no ear for our chatter: nor was she interested in our performance upon the hot mutton-pie—neither to save her victuals from an unusual voracity, in the way of mean landladies, nor to urge us on to a still more remarkable feat, in the way of those portly landladies whose good humor and motherly inclinations celebrate the hospitality of the best inns of the coach-roads. All the while she waited, she sat gloomy at the black window, with her elbow on the sill and her chin in her palm—staring out, her uncomely visage fixed and blank. It was hard to rouse her from this melancholy brood-

ing. Once, I recall, she moved abruptly, and made as if to dust the furniture with the hem of her apron, but seemed to reconsider and abandon the undertaking, whatever it was, and returned to the chair at the window and to the dreary prospect of the night. A poor creature, she!—a lean, elderly woman, in a calico gown, with her meager gray hair in a listless knot; and she was somewhat of a slattern, too—detached from all that had to do with the appearances, and living with no luster of concern with affairs near by and matters of the present. There was nothing for her to see outside—nothing but the puddles under the projecting lantern and the rain driving through the yellow light. I fancied that the woman's abstraction was an habitual thing—a way of escape, perhaps, from the gray color of her life.

"'Ad enough tucker?" says she, when we rose.

"An excellent pie, m'am!" I declared, to rouse her.

She said: "Glad ye liked it." But she was not at all glad. She found no smallest spark of pleasure in our preposterous flattery of that hot mutton-pie.

XXIX

THE SCOWLING MAN

PRESENTLY the rain let up a little. The steady rumble of it on the iron roof fell away to a pleasant patter; and the wind went down, and the sky began to break—disclosing a star or two. Outside we found the long, scowling man, sitting in a corner of the veranda, which was railed off from the common length to seclude genteel folks from an intrusive contiguity of the lusty patrons of the bar. The scowling man's chair was tipped back, and his feet were put up, and his wide felt hat was pulled down: so that what we could see of him in that poor lamplight was not much more than his length and his whiskers. He was talkative, now, after an ill-tempered fashion of conversation, which he must himself command, to be kept in a flowing humor with it; and there was something else to remark with astonishment—being this: that what the philosophy of the scowling man comprehended, and no matter what, was bloody, and not a whit better than bloody, nor the fraction of a degree worse. Whatever was good was bloody good, and whatever was bad was a bloody bad business; and with that the characterization was dismissed as completely accomplished. We pitied this limitation, rather, at

first: for it seemed the poor fellow must for ever describe what was irksome to him in too large a measure of discontent, and fall far short of adequate vigor when it came to the point of condemning that which was utterly damnable in his sight. He had a singular mastery of inflection, however; and with such art could he fondle this lone adjective—and so terribly explode it—that he could flavor his speech like a pirate or give it a tender color.

What disagreed with the scowling man's humor was the impending invasion of the Little Brown Brother—with armies (said he) to possess the tropical northern lands: these being coveted by the Little Brown Brother, who must thrive in a wider territorial sphere or perish. And wherever we followed the Australian byways we came upon this selfsame living fear of Japan—no peaceful occupation by immigration (the Japanese are excluded): a war and mercilessly grasping invasion in due time. It exhibited itself in the cities, as well—in newspaper editorials and in wrathy letters to the newspapers. And everywhere was a steady preparation against an event of this nature—not expressly, however, a Japanese invasion. "Australians are a peaceful business people," said a Minister of Defense, addressing cadets. "But are we prepared to arbitrate on a White Australia? Of course not! If, then, we are not prepared to arbitrate, the only logical alternative is to be prepared for war." In response to this feeling there is in Australia a "universal training in the naval or military forces." And now the scowling man—who seemed to have some connection with the military service of cadets—described his bitterness with the opponents of this healthful

system: with fathers who complained that military training would demoralize the ideals of their sons; and with mothers who feared for the manners and morals of their little darlings (said he) in the promiscuous association of the parade-ground; and with all wowsers—wowsers being overly pious folk, whose degree of piety, in this instance, would forbid a resort to arms in any circumstances to be conceived of.

Australian lads of twelve years begin a more or less voluntary form of military training. It is an indulgent, happy-go-lucky sort of thing, designed primarily to be of physical advantage. When the lads are fourteen years old, a limited military service is severely compulsory, with penalties for evasion, and fines laid upon employers and parents who interfere, and thus continues, with physical exercises, drill, parades, and rifle practice, for four years, whereupon these cadets are passed into the citizen forces. Four whole-day drills are required each year, and twelve half-day drills, and twenty-four night drills. A perfunctory attendance upon these grave obligations—inapt, sullen, frivolous behavior—counts for nothing at all. If the cadet fails to be marked efficient by his battalion officers he must perform his service all over again. In Kalgoorlie of Western Australia—a great dust-storm blowing that night—we watched a column of these "little conscripts" (said a scoffer) march past with rifles and bugles and drums; and they were smart to see—brown uniforms, with tricks of green, and wide-brimmed Australian hats caught up at the side in the Australian way. It is no farcical affair. When we were in Brisbane of Queensland a score of truant youngsters were packed off to the military

barracks for ten days of close confinement and drill; and away they went, in a big Cape wagon, in charge of a sergeant-major and under escort of some brilliant artillerymen—a melancholy little crew, these truants, then, facing ten days of absence from home, with six hours of drill on the hot parade-ground, under a sergeant-major who doubtless knew how to improve the patriotism of small culprits, and would do it with a switch.

What consternation — what lamentations — in a score of Brisbane homes that night!

"Do 'em all good!" growled the scowling man, delighted with our story.

And he went in better heart to bed. He must take the road (said he) right early in the morning.

XXX

THE SENTIMENTAL SMITHY

WE had sniffed no gasoline that day. We had heard no blaring, scaresome demand to yield the road to our betters. Nor had we swallowed a haughty dust. Amble, jog-trot, and canter: these had been the three speeds forward. All travelers were ahorse; and every horseman appraised the beast of the other—absorbed, like an old beau (we fancied), in his survey of those points of beauty and advantage which chiefly engage the cultivated interest of his years. This was true all Australia over. Interest in horseflesh everywhere obtruded itself. Whatever considerable Australian city we visited had its too-considerable race-courses. In Kalgoorlie—that red desert land, scorched to the roots, dust-blown and aglare—the race-track lawns were green and smooth with anxious tending, and the great flowers bloomed, favored for the spectacle, watered without measure, to delight the eye in the occasional seasons of sport. All the bush towns, to the least of them—even the midst of Tasmania, the hill country, where was no town at all, but a pitiably scattered community of shepherds—cherished a course for racing or kept the space of some paddock marked off with stakes. In Perth, and in Melbourne and Sydney, at

the time of our passage, they were racing at the lesser courses, though it was the inimical month of the heat and dry winds: the bugles blowing without heart, the flags limp, the jockeys' parti-colored jackets soiled, the horses straining in the stretch; small bookmakers, with satchels, crying the odds; little boys wagering sixpences, gaming women placing pounds and odd shillings: sodden gatherings, these, of incorrigible addicts.

Now the young jackaroo—bound out for a whack at life—described the Melbourne Cup.

Ah, my word (said he)—but the Melbourne Cup! In the fall of the year, when the winds blow better, and the crisp weather gives a daredevil thrill to the spirit, and the sky is blue, and the sun unfailing —it is *then*, young fellow, m' lad, that they run the Melbourne Cup! And it is one of the wide world's great spectacles of pleasure. The fashion of the town emerges to exhibit the quality and English flavor of its fashionable behavior; and the fashion of the great estates swarms in from the wealthy back country to town—the prettiest, liveliest girls in the world (said the young jackaroo), and the loveliest mothers, and the very youngest grandmothers, and young chaps with a sporting dash to 'em, and grandfathers who know a horse and a whisky-and-soda when they see 'em, and occasionally, perhaps, can hardly distinguish the one from the other. It is all true (the young jackaroo declared): the bright eyes and pretty blushes, and the gowns from London and Paris, and the responsive gallantry of the young chaps with a sporting dash to 'em, and the jovial old grayheads—and the fashionable occasions, as well, and the magnitude of the

spectacle, and the smothering suspense of the race. All Australia wagers, and waits, and wagers again, and shakes with apprehension, and lays a pound or two more, and sputters, at last, like a thousand trails of powder, from Melbourne to the remotest paddocks and deserts, when the ultimate news is loose.

"Why, my dear fellow," the young jackaroo declared, to prove the importance of the occasion, "bookmakers come all the way from London—for the Melbourne Cup!"

He was very much like a young American describing the delights of baseball.

Presently the blacksmith came shyly out of the drip of warm rain to join our company in the genteel inclosure of the veranda. He was a big, gray, rosy man; and he was now near laughably overflowing a suit of decent black, word having reached him (said he) that uncommon travelers were weather-bound at the inn—his Sabbath wear, no doubt, put on, in Scotch pride, to show his quality, as no low bush roisterer. A sentimental fellow, this rosy smithy turned out to be: he told us—near right away—that he was a failure in life; and said this in wistful expectation of our amazement and sympathy, the thing being, in his lonely life, of such large, constant interest to himself, I am sure, that he could not think of it as news of inconsequence to anybody. He was the elder of two Scotch sons (said he); and he had labored at the forge, in some lowland Scotch village, and had scrimped his life, it was plain, and had spoiled his future, too, to improve the fortunes of his brother, who must be sent to the university. The brother was become a dis-

tinguished divine. A grand theologian, man—a minister of power and grace! We had heard of him—doubtless? No? Ah, well, then we were not well acquaint' with Edinboro! That was true: and the truth of it—conveyed in haste and with solicitous emphasis—would have restored the good smithy's pride in his brother's fame (which needed no restoration) had it wavered. And, well, now, the younger son having taken a degree, and having been called, in season, and having been firmly inducted, the smithy had come to the colonies, twenty years ago, to build himself a larger future than he faced; and here was he to this day, poor chap!—a crossroads smithy, outstripped and discouraged in a land of opportunity.

"Too old," says he, "when I landed."

It was not that, I thought: it was more that he had habituated himself to the unprofitable virtue of self-sacrifice.

"Ay," he insisted, "I was too old."

Our smithy began, by and by, to discourse—shrewdly, perhaps—of the philosophy of Thomas Carlyle: it being too pitilessly charged with ill temper and scorn and brutal severity (said he) to improve the happiness of many; and after that he described the oratory of Gladstone and John Bright, and other great parliamentarians, and some great preachers of their generation, his eyes glowing the while, and his lips fairly smacking his delight—and recited for our pleasure some phrases of the eloquence of those years: yet he would barter all these stimulating recollections (said he) to have heard Abraham Lincoln utter even the first sentence of the Gettysburg Address. Were we by any chance

readers—he went on—of the novels of Charles Dickens? And he laughed: so that all at once we discovered the solace of his leisure—but were not astonished, at all: for in other corners of the world, where men are lost from each other, we had fallen upon the same good disclosure, time and again. Here the smithy spoke of Mr. Turveydrop, and Mrs. Gamp and poor Steerforth, and Dick Swiveller, and Mr. Veneering, and little David Copperfield, as of familiar friends—old intimates of his own. Why, man, it seemed, to hear him talk of them all, that they were still living their lives—or that, being dead, they were still mourned: Little Nell, and Paul Dombey, and Dora! And it was good to hear him: it was good to learn once more that this great legacy of laughter and friendship was not yet expended—that it still returned its splendid profit to the common folk of the world. It seemed, for a flash, indeed, being newly out from Home, that we must have news of that cherished circle for the smithy.

"And what, now, is to be the forthcoming work," he might have inquired, "of the celebrated Mr. Copperfield?"

Our sentimental smithy did nothing of the sort, of course; but had he done so—had he so much as ventured to approach an inquiry of that description—our imagination, too, would have taken its high and joyous flight. We should have demanded to be informed, and that instantly, you may be sure, of the whereabouts of Mr. Micawber. Mr. Micawber was somewhere in the colonies: we knew that—we had read the newspaper account, indeed, of a certain convivial occasion, designed to recognize and distinguish Mr. Micawber's activities in a sphere com-

pletely suited to those eminent talents which had hitherto been obscured in dismal and utterly incomprehensible misfortune. And we wanted to know where Mr. Micawber lived. We wanted Mr. Micawber to brew us a delectable brew, and, having submitted to the exhilaration of his performance, we wanted to shake hands with Mr. Micawber, a good many more times than once, being sure that sentiments of admiration might be expressed to Mr. Micawber, in these days of Mr. Micawber's prosperity, without the least pecuniary danger whatsoever. And we wanted to hear the dulcet young Wilkens lift up his voice, and we wanted to be amazed by the growth and extraordinary loveliness of the twins, and we wanted to felicitate the faithful and perspicacious Mrs. Micawber, in the most carefully chosen forms of fashion and refinement. And we wanted more: wanted—if such a thing could be without dealing pain—to tell our admiration and affection to those homely unfortunates who had sailed with Mr. Micawber to refashion their lives of the poor fragments of hope that a great catastrophe had left them to build with.

But the sentimental smithy did not lead us so far away from the realities.

"Ye'll hear me at the forge," said he, rising at last, to leave us, "when ye're off in the mornin'."

We promised to listen for the tinkle and clang of the forge.

"I'm nothin' but a failure," said he.

Ah, well!

"Ye'll hear me singin' at the forge, just the same," said he. He paused. And added: "Best of all I love the plaintive songs."

XXXI

THE MUSICAL STOCKMAN

AT that very moment there was an astonishing quantity of music in the air. It began in roar; and it continued at the pitch of a roar—scorning *diminuendo* and *crescendo*, or carelessly incapable of either, I am not sure which. At any rate, the neighborhood vibrated with melody. It originated in the bar. And at a word from the young jackaroo, it emerged from the bar, and stumbled into the railed inclosure, and sat down beside us, continuing *fortissimo:* the instrument of its production being, as you may know, one of the three drunken stockmen. Having run his ballad to the end, the stockman yielded to the quiet of the night and far-away place and turned out, at once, to be most amiably inclined in the matter of communicating his song. Not only did he communicate it, in a speaking voice, to be written down, but repeated the lines, in the interest of precision, and even assisted with the spelling, all with the air of a man who had at last found his calling and was perfectly aware of the gravity of its responsibilities. And then (said he) we must master the tune: this being particularly important to a perfect exposition of the whole composition. He sang again, therefore, occasionally interrupting him-

self to inquire whether or not we had "caught" the melody, and beseeching us to join with him—vociferating with such fervor, his eyes blazing, his face working, and his forefinger beating the time, and leaning so close, and radiant of such gleeful absorbtion with his occupation, that we could not follow the melody at all, but must give a fascinated attention to the bristling visage and enrapt manner of the good fellow.

Here, then, I transcribe the song of the drunken stockman, called "Flash Jack from Gundagai":

I've shore at Burrabogie, an' I've shore at Toganmain,
I've shore at Big Willandra, an' upon the Coleraine,
But before th' shearin' was over, I've wished meself back again,
Shearin' for ol' Tom Patterson on One Tree Plain.

All among th' wool, boys!
Keep yer wide blades full, boys!
I kin do a respectable tally meself w'enever I likes t' try;
But they know me 'round th' back-blocks as Flash Jack from Gundagai.

I've shore at Big Willandra, an' I've shore at Tilberoo,
An' once I drew me blades, me boys, upon th' famed Barcoo,
At Cowan Downs an' Trida, as far as Moulamein;
But I always was glad t' get back again t' One Tree Plain.

I've pinked 'em with the Wolseleys, an' I've rushed with B-bows, too,
An' shaved 'em in th' grease, me boys, with th' grass-seed showin' through;
But I never slummed me pen, me boys, whate'r it might contain,
While shearin' for ol' Tom Patterson on One Tree Plain.

I've been whalin' up the Lachlan, an' I've dossed on Cooper's Creek,
An' once I rung Cudjingie shed, an' blued it in a week;

But when Gabriel blows his trump, me boys, I'll catch the
mornin' train,
An' push for ol' Tom Patterson's on One Tree Plain.

All among th' wool, boys!
Keep yer wide blades full, boys!
I kin do a respectable tally meself w'enever I likes t' try;
But they know me 'round th' back-blocks as Flash Jack from
Gundagai.

Flash Jack from Gundagai was a shearer of celebrated skill, if this boastful recital had the right of it—and the devil of a fellow, as well, and a bit on the other side of the law. When he *pinked 'em with the Wolseleys* he had employed a mechanical shearing-device so effectually that his sheep were clipped to the skin; and when he *rushed with B-bows, too*, he had made amazing haste with the hand-shears. When he *rung Cudjingic shed* he had proved himself the fastest shearer employed on that great station; and when he *blued it in a week* he had squandered the earnings of this glorious achievement, at some pot-house like Forty Mile Inn, in the tumultuous period of seven days. All this, being not yet too far gone in his potations, the stockman elucidated, with the profoundest determination to be exact, warning us, the while, that a deal of pernicious misinformation was let loose upon every new chum (tenderfoot) that came to the bush.

XXXII

THE MELANCHOLY LANDLADY

BY this time the shower was over. There was no patter of rain—no least drip or little splash. It was deep-dark below. The lantern of the inn—as though discouraged with its invitation to roisterers and night-bound travelers—had burned low and gone out. The inn-yard was black; and there were no lighted windows round about to enliven and mellow the black spaces of the night, and the highroad was black, and the bush beyond was black, and very still, as well, after the rain, no breath of wind now blowing past. What noise and stirring of life there was in the world was in the bar—an evil business, truly! All the stars were out, though. The Southern Cross was splendidly aglow far overhead and beyond in the highest night. Every cherished new acquaintance of the innumerable multitude twinkled down upon Forty Mile Inn with the selfsame heartening good humor of the old friends of the other hemisphere. They look down from on high, all these stars, and see the wide whole of it, and remember the beginning, and have watched all the generations aspire and agonize and die, and know the meaning of our poor affairs, and have grown very, very wise, in every way, you may be sure, even to

OUR DEPARTURE FROM FORTY MILE INN

a mastery of the ultimate philosophy, which must apprehend, of course, the measure of the infinitely large, and the measure of the infinitely little, too, in time and timelessness, death, life, grief, ecstasy; and you may easily fancy, if you have a turn for pretty imaginings, that the mysteries which terribly concern us for a little while are all known to the stars and of small consequence in their sight—that the serenity of their regard of the world conveys the assurance of some amusing surprise awaiting revelation to us every one.

It was time, now, to turn in. The amiable coachman of the "Billy Bullet"—whose glad passengers we were—came from the kitchen to warn us off to bed. Forty miles of the road to-morrow (said he); and it would be a fair day for travel, but slow wheels, with no wind to dry that wet going. In the musty parlor of the inn, where we had supped, the melancholy landlady was waiting to light candles for us. She did not speak to us. She got up from her chair by the black window, in listless patience, neither wakeful nor worn, her uncomely countenance as blank as before, and touched a flame to the wick of one candle, but left the other cold. The match flamed high—was blown out. I fancied she had forgotten us in a sudden abstraction of thought. She made no move to light the second candle. It was a task not yet completed: we must wait upon her mood—wait there, wondering, with astonishment, why she had let the flame of her match go out, why she paused now, staring at the black wick, in a frowning dream, as though pondering some dark matter, of which she would speak, in a moment, when she had arranged her mind and gathered spirit

to utter it. What, indeed, was in her mind—what drear confidence she might have been encouraged to give us—I do not know. She did not tell us what was in her mind. Her frown broke, then, but not yet in a smile, and she touched another flame to the second candle, now with a flash of interest; and she took up the candlestick, with a show of determined purpose, and went to the wall, and there dusted the frame and glass of a picture—which needed no dusting, I am sure—with the hem of her apron, and held the candle high for us to see.

"Cunnin', aren't 'e?" she whispered, smiling at last.

It was the photograph of a baby lying in its coffin—a faded photograph.

When the candles were blown out, the little drover was sound asleep, stowed away for the night, as deep and cozy in sleep, indeed, as he could very well be in his own bed in the home to which he was returning; but the young jackaroo was wakeful, and the long, scowling man was growling under his breath Light came in from the bar—streams and beams of lamplight, boldly entering by way of every crack, and by way of every knot-hole, in that flimsy partition which was designed to separate our repose from the conviviality beyond. And noise came in—a melody, in stentorian proportions, expressing sentiments, uncommon to hear with that loud freedom, which were bound to anger ears composed for sleep. The scowling man got up, and put his lips to a knot-hole (I surmise); and he exploded his beloved little part of speech into the bar, like a shower of bombs, with such rapidity, and with detonations so startling, though he managed somehow

to muffle them from us, that the drunken stockman's song fell away, and honest silence came, following a terrified confabulation in whispers. And then, all at once—it seemed no time at all—the cockatoos were calling us up and scolding us for lazy fellows, the laziest lie-abeds that ever traveled that high-road, the laziest, at any rate, within the memory of the very oldest cockatoo of the scandalized flock. I fancy that a laughing-jackass had a part in the tree-top conversation. I am not sure, of course; but if a laughing-jackass did not chance to be at that moment casting bursts of scornful laughter into the midst of the naughty confusion I am very much mistaken. A cockatoo can scold; but a cockatoo cannot express its contempt in disgusting peals of laughter.

Long before this the scowling man had taken the road. And now the little drover was up, and out in the sunshine, too, and the jackaroo was splashing and blowing in the basin, and breakfast was waiting (if a man could believe his own nose). And presently—being breakfasted, now, and waiting, in the blue, fresh morning, for the amiable coachman to put the horses in the "Billy Bullet," with the help of the bleared little stable-boy—awaiting in the sunshine, we heard the tinkle and clang and clink of the gray blacksmith's forge. And he was singing, too, as blithely as he had said he would sing—a sure, hearty voice, ringing above the tinkle and clink and clang, as clean as that good morning—a failure in life, here at his familiar labor, and joyous—

Her brow was like the snow-drift,
Her neck was like the swan,
And her face it was the fairest
That e'er the sun—

—clear through to the end of the tender ballad. And "The Land o' the Leal," then—and presently "Auld Robin Gray." The plaintive songs for him! Yet I would not shame the good gray smithy by hinting that the plaintive color of his music expressed regret—that he wished he had withheld some part of what his youth had dutifully given. He was singing still—and the forge was clinking and clanging to the blows of his lusty labor—when the "Billy Bullet" took the road and went galloping past. We heard him singing until the swift hoof-beats of the four vanquished his melodious voice and left us to listen to the patter and rattle of the road; and you will know all about it, if you sing with him, while his voice follows—and if you vision for yourself the sunshine and breeze and blue sky of the world through which we sped along—

Her brow was like the snow-drift,
Her neck was like the swan,
And her face it was the fairest
That e'er the sun—

XXXIII

A QUEENSLAND SHOWER

WE abandoned the coach at the railroad and there took train for Rockhampton. Late one night we boarded a comfortable coastal boat for Cairns of North Queensland—there to wait for the New Guinea packet. At this time of the year the Queensland tropical coast was flourishing under the last of the rains. Here far in the north it is sheltered well from the worst gales of the South Pacific and the Coral Sea by the Great Barrier Reef. It is a rich and lovely coast, indeed. There are many islands, all of tender color, green and yellow and gray, in the vagrant, showery rains and cloudy sunsets; and there are a thousand placid azure channels, sunlit and warm and languid, and good harbors, as well, and brown, deep perpetual rivers. And there are pastured hills, and abundant fruit and sugar lands, with towns of promise, shaded with palm and banyan and pepper-tree; and beyond, over the ranges, lie wide grassy highlands, the unsettled bush awaiting its inevitable occupation still more remote in the west. These were autumn showers: March showers—clearing showers. Some fine day, and that soon, too, a lively breez would sweep the sky clean of its last cloud, its last shred of mist, and the dry,

blue weather of winter would set in. mellow and dependable. Dry weather impended—a stretch of sparkling winter months: what rains would fall were near all down, determining the season.

Out of Colombo, where, late in the spring before this, on the voyage to Sydney, the Australian mails were put aboard, the returning Queenslander had come uproariously into the smoking-room, waving the latest Melbourne newspaper, his amiable big face alive and alight and warmly flushed with relief.

"I've got mine!" he shouted.

What was this?

"Rain!"

Rain?

"Rain, m' boy! Rain in Queensland! Rain in Queensland! Ten inches at my station already! My word!"

As a matter of course, fall now approaching, the Queensland coast, to which we had come these many miles from Colombo, was by this time drenched. But the back-blocks? What about the Queensland back-blocks?—Cunnamulla and Muttaburra and Camooweal and Bungeworgoai. Well, there would be no drought in the back-blocks. The thing was determined. It was all over with: the rains were *down* in the back-blocks. Copious rains, too—thirty inches, sixty inches, eighty inches! All the Queensland streams were in flood, the water-holes overflowed, the downs were springing, the farthest bush was in good green health. Grass was assured in Queensland—grass in abundance for the twenty millions of Queensland sheep, knee-high grass for the five million head of Queensland cattle, fattening wayside grass for the long, slow droving over the

A FRIDAY-NIGHT CONCERT ON THE BEACH

stock-routes to the markets at tidewater. There was no shadow of disaster. Station-owners, planters, selectors: they would flourish—every one. It was to be a season of plenty, coast and bush and grasslands: maize and tobacco and sugar-cane, bananas and matchless pineapples, and every luscious tropical fruit—fat beef, too, and butter and toothsome mutton and much good wool.

A moment before, here at Cairns, the stars had been out—the Southern Cross winking its brilliant eyes—in a friendly regard of that merrymaking little Queensland town. The shower had crept overhead in the dark. With the first heavy drops, spattering hot and smartly in the circle of torchlight, the brass band, playing a Friday-night concert on the grassy beginnings of the beach, midway of the street in front of the hotel, made ready for flight by hastily executing some perfunctory chords of "God Save the King," once more to declare an ample and unfaltering patriotism. It seemed to be an obligation of heroic importance. But having blown these fervid blasts and wheezes, in defiance of the deluge, and having broken down in a confusion of piccolo toots and bass-horn snorts, the bandsmen doused their torches and took to their heels. There was a pelting shower to urge them—a first volley of great tepid drops. And it was a rout. Off they tumbled to shelter, in shameless disorder, after a scurrying audience of tanned Australians, white-clad and superior, and of ragged blackfellows, of mincing, squealing Chinamen and of jolly Japanese.

"Fifteen feet of rain a year," the Inspector of Mounted Police repeated. "Think of it!"

We reflected and were astonished.

"Sometimes twenty," says he.

It was amazing.

"Why," he went on, delighted to complete our surprise, "I've known it to rain an inch an hour—and keep on raining all day, too. In New South Wales I've known it to rain *seven* inches in *two* hours. Flood? Quite so! At Mooloolah, here in Queensland, they once had a fall of thirty inches at a pour. And back on the Blackall Range, on the second of February, eighteen hundred and ninety-three," he concluded, delivering the circumstantial thrust with a triumphant smile, "it rained no less than thirty-six inches."

He paused.

"Do you take it?" he inquired, anxiously.

Well, indeed, we were none too sure that we had taken it.

"Three feet of water?"

"One yard."

It was hard to adjust this prodigious spectacle for comparison.

"Quite so," says he. "What's the rainfall in New York?"

This was altogether beyond us.

"Quite so," he agreed, briskly. "I'll find out." He dodged into his own quarters—all the sleeping-rooms of that airy tropical hotel opened on the upper veranda—and presently returned, thumbing a great book in which the useful knowledge was contained. "Here we have it. New York: forty-two inches—the average. That is to say, to wit: that in the little place I'm telling you about, here in Queensland, almost as much rain fell in a day and

a night, let us say, as falls in New York in the course of a whole year." He looked over his spectacles to catch our surprise. There was a good deal of surprise on the wing. He was gratified. "Do you know Singapore?" he inquired. We knew something of Singapore—its dismal reputation in this respect. In Singapore it showers every day—or twice as much the next day. "Quite so," said he. "Then let me tell you this: it rains three times as much in Singapore as it does in New York, and four times as much as it rains in London; and here on the northeast coast of Queensland"—he slapped the book shut for emphasis—"it rains twice as much as it does in Singapore."

"Some rain," I remarked.

"Some?" he protested, not used to the American twist. "Not *too* little!"

"Not *too* little?"

"I mean a jolly good lot."

"And I."

It was an understanding.

XXXIV

TROOPERS OF THE OUTLANDS

DOWN came the rain, then—a mighty dousing of the town! It cleared the walks, obscured the shop windows, extinguished the green and red of the harbor lights, drenched the banyans, flooded the streets, and pervaded every shelter with warm moisture; and it beat a furious uproar on the iron roof of the upper veranda of the hotel, threatening to demolish it flat forthwith, and continued the tumult, without lessening the pitch for an instant, as *i* mischievously determined, this season, at last, to complete its perennial endeavor to dissolve the trim town cluster and wash it into the harbor by way of its own gutters. And the patter and gurgle and splash of it—and the thick night and the sudden torrent in the street—gave point to the Inspector's happy contention that service with the Queensland Mounted Police was, in the rainy season, a devilish rigorous employment. We were to understand that the service demanded men—men with a smart liking for adventure, and with body and heart enough, too, to further the inclination on its way to the last frontiers of romance. We were to understand, in short, that it demanded blooded men—thoroughbreds.

"Reckless as a bushranger," the Inspector declared, "and as cunning as a bubonic rat."

The Inspector had himself come through the rough and tumble of the service, years of remote patrol and the bloody business of pursuit, with cattle-thieves, outlaws, and red-handed savages to fetch in from the bush, dead or alive—the long riding, in flood and blistering drought, and the tracking, the chase, the shooting, the capture; and he was now at last become an officer of conspicuous rank in a distinguished, wide-riding organization of a military sort, as delicately jealous of its efficiency and honor as any British regiment of the regular line. He was no mere superior of city bobbies, snaring timid small game in the streets, with a tap on the shoulder for sufficient weapon and authority: he was a veteran of the big man-hunt—a sentimentalist under the skin, withal, and seasoned with Irish tenderness. We gathered presently that for many years he had lived in close and affectionate companionship with an ideal of daily behavior which he called My Duty. It was a complete expression. And plainly it had been philosophy enough. A simple performance, truly: yet it had fashioned a man who was still unable to contemplate fear and shame and all manner of dishonor in men with anything short of amazement.

"I say," said he, his voice lowered, his attitude inviting confidence, as though the thing should be spoken of under cover, "what about that New York murder?"

"Which New York murder?"

"The one they have on their hands."

"Which one?"

Somewhat in the manner of a stage villain the Inspector peered around to make sure of privacy.

"The gambler, you know," said he, cautiously. "Shot down in front of a New York pub, wasn't he? Right?"

That was ghastly fact.

"And they have an inspector of police in custody? Charged with complicity, isn't he? What's the *truth* of it? The despatches say—"

At that moment a trim trooper in a dripping cloak and khaki came clicking down the veranda with a telegram. He saluted, presented the message, saluted again, stepped back his paces, according to the regulations, doubtless, and saluted for the third time, standing then at attention, until, having been dismissed, he took instant advantage of a last opportunity to salute and clicked away. Whatever the contents of the message, they preoccupied the Inspector past continuing his pursuit of dependable information relating to the incredible conduct of the police of New York.

A Queensland trooper, having measured up to the physical standard of a man, not less than a wiry five-foot-eight of length and a muscular bulk of eleven stone, with a good eye to back that minimum, and having been heartily accredited as to character, and having shown an aptitude for the service, and having exposed his quality in general, in the course of a cunning interview with the Commissioner, who has a sharp eye for defects and a touchy regard for the honor of the corps, goes then into barracks for a twelvemonth's rigorous military training, whence he emerges, at last, a soldierly fellow—as trim and

disciplined and impersonally swift in the performance of duty as any old Tommy of the British line. It is a far patrol, at first—some last region of the back-blocks, where rogues and blackfellows are to be kept in hand and a widely scattered and forlorn community is to be served with paternal solicitude by the only representative of the state within the hope of reach. There are almost seven hundred thousand square miles to police, from Thursday Island to the long New South Wales border: which implies lonely billets, vast districts, and long riding in haste.

"I rode, once, after a cattle-duffer," said the Inspector, "two hundred and twenty-five miles in thirty-six hours."

He was a big man.

"Seventeen stone and eight at the time," said he.

From the beginning of his service the earth of his neighborhood shakes when the trooper goes abroad—strutting the street of his small township, pipe-clayed and polished, with the broad brim of his felt hat flirted up at the side, in the Australian way, or galloping the dusty roads, on active service, clanking authority with every hoof-beat, or perched behind the hump of his camel, lumbering through the deserts. It is a heartening spectacle, indeed, wherever encountered in the bushlands of the Commonwealth—New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, Western Australia, the Northern Territory or Queensland. A soldierly figure, spick and span, as opportunity runs: khaki-clad in the heat, with serge and leather trappings for winter weather, and white cord breeches, a white helmet and sword for parade. He has a wide latitude of

discretion. It is assumed at headquarters, it seems, that in any event he will be on the right side of justice and propriety. And he is the law of the frontiers: where he rides there is order; and where his hand falls in the king's name there is one less rascal at large or a trooper shamed out of the service.

In the days when the Inspector was a trooper (said he) he took a savage blackfellow—meaning by this a blackfellow of some uncivilized bush—for the murder of a white squatter. The slaughter of one blackfellow by another is relatively a thing of small consequence: the aborigine who achieves this savage *éclat* is chastened by an easy detention of a year or two and liberated to his tribe. But to spear a white man is a crime most heinous and intolerable. It is visited with a pursuit which never stops short of capture or a death at bay in the open—a chase of a thousand miles, it may be, and quick grim action at the end of it, arrest or the alternative. Having now with vast satisfaction taken his savage, the Inspector made haste back with him toward his station to dodge the impending rains. But the rains caught him. A river, dry in the outward track, was widely in flood; and on the bank of it—the rain threatening a long increase—the Inspector stopped, chagrined. It was wild country; and the trooper was alone with his captive, who desired nothing more, as the trooper very well knew, than a cunning opportunity to do his captor to death.

A crossing must be made.

"Well, now, *how*," the Inspector inquired of us, in twinkling expectation of our bewilderment, "did I manage it?"

"You swam."

He laughed.

"First of all," I continued, to make the action pleasantly melodramatic, "you strapped your revolver on your head; and having done this, as any good bushman could, you took your knife between your teeth, drove the blackfellow in advance, and so came safely to the other side."

The invention was woefully short of the reality.

"'Tis plain," said the Inspector, "that you've never seen a blackfellow in the water. Man alive, they swim like sharks—like turtle and dugong! A white man would have as much chance with a crocodile. And there's another thing: I can't swim a stroke."

"Then you didn't get across?"

"Ah, but I *did!*" he cried, delighted. "I made my prisoner take me. And the big divil had a clever dodge, too. I give him credit for cunning—I do that. He was to loop a strap over his forehead, you see, and let me flop along at the other end. It was the surest way, says he—the usual way. And that was quite true. But it didn't suit my book. Ah, they're sly, treacherous brutes! Trust myself with that nigger free in the water? Not I! I love my life. He would have turned on me midway. He would have had me drowned in a jiffy. 'Ah, no,' says I; 'it may be that I'm to drown, but if *I* drown, *you'll* drown, and that's the way we'll have it, b'gorry!' So I strapped his wrist to mine—with a foot of leather for leeway. There was no getting loose, neither for him nor for me. 'Twould take the slash of a knife to do it. I saw to the lashing myself. Do you take my plan? If one of us went,

both would go. I had him fast. He couldn't get away. He might drown me, quite so; but I would have my hands on his throat before he got very far with the business, and he would pay with his life."

"And then?"

"I kicked him into the water. He took me across."

It was a prodigious adventure.

"I wonder why it is," the Inspector mused, "that you can't keep a young dog of a trooper from doing foolhardy things like that?"

"A *young* dog?"

"That's it!" he agreed. "Sheer youth!"

XXXV

LICENSE TO KILL

IN the early Queensland days—when the Black Police, a constabulary of half-tamed savages, officered by white men, rode the country, the ruthless arm of the law on the wild frontier—sentiment was for a time not seriously opposed to the extermination of the blackfellows. In the eyes of the settlers they were like wild beasts—their appearance, customs, and behavior. It was the custom to shoot the culprits at sight, their tribesmen and dingoes; and there were men who kept tally of their achievements in the field—"Thirty-seven to date!" Blackfellows were intolerably pestiferous: they speared the cattle, hamstrung the horses, thieved what they could lay hands on, and were sometimes bold and cunning enough to murder the settlers, having first tortured them with devilish invention; and for all this wanton work they were in reprisal massacred in defenseless droves—driven to corner, in lagoons and hollows, like rabbits and wallaby, and shot or cut down without any let up until the last shivering wretch had fallen. It was a black business altogether: there are gruesome tales abroad of these days—of natives hunted for sport or picked off for target practice, and of the employment of great fires

to dispose of the game when bagged in awkward numbers.

"Poisoned 'em, too," said an acquaintance of the road we traveled at that time.

It was a tale so grotesquely improbable that we laughed in scorn of it.

"No, no!" protested our gentleman. "I *mean* it."

"How then was the thing managed?"

"Easily enough. Poisoned 'em like rats. Gave 'em barrels of poisoned flour."

Traveling the roads of the Queensland back-blocks we encountered a blackfellow shuffling through the dust from his reservation to town. He was an old man, an old, old man, in reservation rags, whose countenance excited a convulsion of disgust, so very bestial was it, and whose proximity, in a general way, was altogether shocking to the composure. He had no savage pride like a North American Indian, to win the smallest measure of any man's respect; nor had he any jollity, like a negro, to gain an indulgent regard, but had only a slouch and a mumble and a half-witted titter. Somewhat he resembled a negro—the color and thick lips and flat nose of him; but he had no clear, mild eye, nor was he in any way upstanding and frank—flaring red and treacherously shifty little eyes, indeed, set far back, and a slinking way, like a mongrel dog brought to heel; and a gap in his shirt disclosed that he was as hairy as an ape. Indeed, he was so debased in feature and demeanor that it stirred the wrath to find him fashioned indubitably in the likeness of a man. Beholding him, I was almost enabled to credit the

preposterous tale that it was at one time thought to be no grave breach of Christian morality to feed the aborigines to the dogs.

Near by this town, long ago, this man's tribe had murdered a family of settlers in the night, save one lad, who escaped death by opportunely tumbling to the floor between the bed and the wall, himself wounded, unconscious and left for dead. What the provocation was nobody knows. It is probable that there was no specific provocation. It had doubtless been a wanton thing—a childish mischief—undertaken upon savage impulse and accomplished for nothing more than the momentary pleasure of dealing death to some living creature. This was the inspiration of many similar deeds—neither vengeance nor spoil, but the swift, bestial, wanton blood-lust, indulged, celebrated, laughed over, and for the time forgotten; and therein lies a sufficient explanation of the terrible character of the retaliation. Whatever the case, the boy, having thus narrowly survived, made his way to Brisbane, where he related his story to the authorities, and to such good purpose, as it turned out, that he was given a rifle and free leave to return to his district and shoot as many blackfellows as he could manage, being heartily assured that the law would not molest him.

"You see," said our fellow-traveler, "he was regularly licensed."

"By the Department of Game and Fisheries?" I scoffed.

"Ah, come now!" he replied. "I am not joking. I do not mean to say," he went on, "that the authorities gave this boy an engrossed license, suit-

able for framing, but I do assert that they commissioned him to kill blackfellows, and that his commission was not altogether singular, but one of a good many. And he did kill blackfellows—hundreds of them, possibly. He killed them where he could find them, running the bush or employed on the stations, not even hesitating in the presence of their white masters. And by and by the thing became a nuisance. It was awkward for the station-owners to have their blackboys disposed of in this way. There were complaints. I recall that one station-owner had his best black servant shot from the saddle on the road. He was very angry; but the boy flourished his commission, and the station-owner could do nothing about it. The end of it was that the boy was summoned to Brisbane and bought off. The old blackfellow whom we passed a few moments ago boasts that he was one pursued by this industrious youngster. And he had a narrow escape. He says that he took to the river, and that he submerged himself, breathing meanwhile through a reed, until the hunt was given up."

XXXVI

IN THE KING'S NAME

IN these secure and enlightened days the Queensland blacks are cherished by the state with anxious solicitude—encouraged with rations, blankets, school-teachers, and religious instruction. A Chief Protector of Aborigines, his deputies and the police are charged with the business. "All we can do," said a Queenslander of consequence, with rhetorical pathos, "is ease the last moments of this dying race." But there are the outlands. Australia is most populous on the coast. There is a rapid decrease as the country approaches the wild interior. Railroads stop far short of it. Civilization thins out. The towns diminish and scatter and the stock-stations grow to vast and vaguely bounded estates. In the remotest back-blocks the stations merge with the wild lands; and beyond—toward the center of the continent—lie the deserts and unmapped bush-lands and the lusty savage life of them. In the Never-Never (as the outermost places are called) the trooper's duty concerns itself largely with the capture of offending blacks who escape to the dry-lands and barren ranges. Still on the frontier the blacks spear cattle and occasionally murder settlers and unwary travelers; and they must surely be

taken and punished if security is to be established in the rich lands of the Never-Never.

It is a service which sometimes demands the exercise of an amazing ingenuity and daring.

"All the cunning," the Inspector declared again, "of a bubonic rat!"

Once the Inspector—the Inspector with whom we sat on the broad upper veranda of the hotel—was caught on the wrong side of a river of the outlands with a problematical black tracker and two vicious and mighty prisoners. It was far "out back"—the empty wilderness. And it was the beginning of the rainy season. A drenching rain was falling when they came to the bank. It went whipping past with half a gale of wind. The river, in flood, was a wide, brown, swirling torrent, carrying a swift and threatening freight of trees and dead underbrush. It was not a heartening prospect, ruffled by the wind, contemplated through a mist of driving rain: there were currents, shallows, whirlpools—a deep rush of water. The Inspector's prisoners were not repentant culprits. They were naked, savage, terrified by capture and restraint; and their irons had fretted them near to madness. In short (said he) they were like wild beasts, lately taken in a jungle, being conveyed to captivity. And the black tracker, too, was a source of grave perplexity. He was not to be trusted: he was himself fresh from the bush, half tamed, not proven; and it was the part of caution to assume that he had rather join forces with the Inspector's prisoners than serve the Inspector.

It will be recalled that the Inspector could not swim.

"Not a stroke, mind you!" said he.

It was a predicament, indeed. With what shrewd resource the Inspector solved the many and perilous difficulties of the situation could not be fathomed by the most cunning bushman—nor invented by the most reckless teller of tales. There was the river: it was hardly passable at best, and here in the wilderness there was no craft for crossing it. To attempt to swim the horses through a flood so wide and violent would be to invite the treachery of the black tracker and the escape of the prisoners. There would be confusion; and the issue of that confusion would be the Inspector's death or dishonor. It was not to be chanced. The prisoners must be kept close; they must be unshackled, at last, and driven into the water, but they must surely be kept within range and reasonably placid aim. They could not be shepherded to the other side from the back of a frenzied horse. The black tracker, too, always a menace in a predicament, must be restrained, if by nothing more salutary than a cold glance, occasionally cast in his direction, carrying the threat of quick death.

"You mustn't let your tracker get behind your back," the Inspector paused to explain. "No, no! My word, no!"

Invariably not?

"A raw one, especially," he replied, "if you're in trouble. They're treacherous brutes."

First of all the Inspector lashed two V-shaped pack-saddles end to end. And here, then, was the framework of a small craft. He turned them upside down. It was a good beginning. Of the oilcloth cover of his swag (blankets) he fashioned an outer skin. This he tucked in and kept firmly in

place by means of some sapling branches. The craft was finished. He launched it. It floated—floated dry; and so low was its center of gravity when he sat in it (like a man in a bath-tub) that it seemed to be amply seaworthy, notwithstanding the turbulence of the current it must weather. How, then, to propel it across? Well, the Inspector's ingenuity did not fail him. His inspiration had included the means. Having disarmed his black tracker and despatched him in advance with the horses, the intrepid Inspector, stark naked and rueful, harnessed his two prisoners to the bow of his craft and set out on his voyage, his heart in his mouth with fear of drowning, his stout person rigidly upright and stationary, his revolver covering the astonished creatures whom in this remarkable way he compelled to swim with him in safety to the other side, where, devoutly thankful, he resumed his journey.

"It is quite the most extraordinary exploit of the sort," I protested, "that ever I heard of!"

"Quite so," said he, mildly.

After all, the blackfellows of the outlands are no warriors. They are given to bloody mischief—to foolish, wanton murder, accomplished from ambush or in the dark. In packs they are truly to be feared by a helplessly inferior force. But they do not make war. As compared with the North American Indian of pioneering days, for example, they are no worse than exasperating. Speaking in the loose fashion of the layman, they are of a low order: they have no useful domestic animals, they do not practise agriculture even of a most primitive description, they have no fixed habitations, but only the

mia-mia, a temporary canopy or wind-break, of brush. Thus from season to season they subsist and wander like the beasts of the field. And they are not in a largely more intelligent way capable of concerted action. They have no hereditary chiefs—no chiefs, properly speaking, at all, except old men of more or less influence. Consequently an attack by any tribe in full force and under powerful leadership is not to be expected; and an alliance, tribe with tribe, for sustained and directed war, could never occur. Wary travelers are safe enough in their progress through the land, and the outermost settlers of the Never-Never, so long as they do not neglect the accepted, simple precautions, are reasonably secure.

Australia is rid of the bushrangers who long ago celebrated the roads of the colony with their picturesque villainies. It is a curious circumstance that the last band of consequence to be dispersed by the police followed their adventures incased in visored helmets and a sort of medieval armor. Bushranging vanished with the gold fever of Victoria and New South Wales. In the Kalgoorlie days there was no highwayman of conspicuous achievement. Nor was there lawlessness of a capital degree: the small offenders—thieves and claim-jumpers—were merely drummed out of camp and forbidden the fields. But there are half-caste and white rogues to be dealt with by the constabulary in the back blocks. In some small town of the Queensland bush we encountered the announcement that His Excellency the Governor had been pleased to direct the offer of £500 in reward for the capture of a young horse-breaker whose mother was a half-caste Chinese and

whose father was a Kanaka. It was an enterprising crime: between Turkey Station and Bustard Head, the refugee had shot down the swain of a young woman of whom he was himself enamoured, and had thereupon carried her off with him on the back of his horse, leaving no trace.

Shearers and drovers are a wild company to keep in hand when the checks are distributed and the liquor begins to flow in the back-block public-houses.

"Ah, yes, but they don't draw knives," said the Inspector, "and they don't shoot from their coat pockets."

In short, their customs were British.

"They settle their differences with their fists, the Inspector declared, warmly, "like *men!*"

Once the Inspector cut out his quarry from a "mob" of rogues in a shanty-saloon of the Queensland frontier. It was a remote and dangerous wayside inn—a rendezvous, after a sort, of cattle-duffers (thieves) and outlaws, and suspects of every Australian description. To enter single-handed and demand a man in the king's name was a feat of cold temerity; but the Inspector accomplished it without agitation—a casual arrest, as it were, an affair of no general consequence—and rode away with his captive. It was a hanging charge. The prisoner had nothing more to lose. He would kill the Inspector if he could. And the Inspector had no illusions. But the two rode amiably together until the day's riding was done. They made camp in the bush. The billy was boiled. There was a companionable smoke, more amiable and diverting conversation. It turned out that the prisoner was a clever, agreeable fellow. The Inspector rather

fancied him. But at last, night having fallen, and the talk languishing with the fire in the bowls of the pipes, and a journey of many days lying ahead, and the Inspector being desperately sleepy, it was time to turn in. How about a guard? The Inspector did not by any means propose to lose a night's sleep.

It was a simple arrangement, after all: the Inspector handcuffed his prisoner to his own wrist, threw his revolver out of reach, and lay down to sleep.

"Why dispose of the weapon?" I inquired.

"I had no wish to kill my prisoner."

"Very true; but your prisoner—"

"A tussel? Ah, well, I looked him over, and I thought I was as good a man as he was."

"But he might—"

"Pish!" the Inspector scoffed. "I wouldn't give him the satisfaction of thinking I was afraid of him."

Well, now, it was still raining. A wet night, truly—a drenching, splashing, gurgling night. Rain drummed on the roof and overflowed the eaves. The air was thick with a tepid moisture. It was dark in the flooded streets. The town had gone to bed. Another dripping trooper came clicking down the broad veranda and interrupted the Inspector with a punctilious salute and a telegram; and having been dismissed, like the first, and having executed the maximum number of salutes allowed by the regulations, he clicked off to the rainy night, leaving the Inspector in the mind to pursue his quest of reliable information relating to the alleged incredible conduct of the police of New York. This he did

with the most polite consideration. Our pride was not to be damaged in the least. The Inspector (said he) was asking for information; he intended no reflection upon the quality of our constabulary—no indelicate insinuation whatsoever. We were to understand that. And, moreover, he was not disposed to discuss an affair so questionable in the open. As it chanced, our situation was secluded. Except for ourselves the broad veranda was deserted. Yet the Inspector sat up in his steamer-chair and peered cunningly around to make sure that our privacy was not a thing of appearance only.

"I say," he whispered, leaning confidentially near, "what about that New York Inspector of Police?"

"He is in custody."

"In custody! Think of it! Well, now, I say, between ourselves, you know—you won't take this amiss, I'm sure — the despatches seem to hint at what they call 'an alliance between the police and crime.' Really, now, what do they mean by such extraordinary talk as that?"

"That there is an 'alliance.'"

"You don't mean to say that it is openly *charged?*"

"O Lord, yes!"

"My word!" the Inspector gasped.

Really, he was greatly shocked.

XXXVII

A NIGGER IN A HURRICANE

NEW GUINEA bound, we had come north to Cairns from Sydney, by way of the Queensland coach-roads and ship from Rockhampton, designing at Cairns to take the New Guinea packet for Port Moresby. A long by-path of travel, however, touching the North Queensland ports and New Guinea, leads from Sydney to Singapore. In the mellow charm of sailing new seas, and in the lively little surprises, too, it is the more remunerative half of the wide Australian détour from Colombo. Australian travelers, not gravely concerned with time, wisely followed it from Sydney into the world again. There are many days ashore, in alien, savage little ports, never heard of before—all amazingly far away from the completest and most talkative learning in elementary geography; and there is much slow landing and shipping of spicy cargo—lying in the offing, now, on a flat, green sea, a breeze blowing past with the tropical odors of shore, and lighters clustered about the sun-soaked, drowsy ship, swarming with noisy native labor, naked and grinning and altogether outlandish. It is like a voyage accomplished at leisure, with many ports of call, truly out of the way and engaging—a month or more, splash-

ing softly north to the tropics, and rolling west a bit below the Line, with a singular mixture of shipmates to be intimate with; and all the while it is a warm, sleepy, breezy passage, sparkling with the spray of the blue trade-winds, and brilliant with sunlit, incredible color, at sea and ashore. The craft that ply that way are well-found, comfortable, jovial; they dawdle up the Australian east coast—a course in the shelter of the Great Barrier Reef—and from the northernmost Queensland ports splash blithely across the Coral Sea to the cannibal land of New Guinea, whence they return through Torres Strait, with gingerly caution, to Thursday Island, steaming, then, by way of Port Darwin, of the unsettled Northern Territory, to the wild islands of the Arafura and Banda Seas, and to Surabaya, Samarang and Batavia, colorful cities of Java. Singapore lies beyond, across an oily, misty stretch of dead, gray water (at the time of our passage); and at Singapore all the main-traveled roads of the sea, going east and west, come together in the heat and tepid rain, and any one may be taken.

While we waited at Cairns for the New Guinea packet to be under way across the Coral Sea we got ear of a Cape York aborigine who had some years before astounded the Australian world by saving his life from the sea in the midst of a great hurricane. The wind had fallen down so swiftly—and with such furious white violence (said they)—that of the five hundred luggers of the pearling fleet which it cast away some were blown to the bottom within a few fathoms of shore with the loss of all hands. It was a rare tale: we doubted it—in the manner of all

NATIVE BOATS GATHER ABOUT, EAGER TO BARTER

travelers of cock-sure caution in a new country. So greatly was our interest enlisted, however, that we put off in a sloop to clap eyes on the hero of the incredible adventure, and to have his own recit[illegible] And having sailed some fifteen miles to the f[illegible] coral islands of the Great Barrier Reef in brisk weather—the warm, misty rain, great clouds, gusty wind, steaming sunshine, of the changing season—we dropped anchor in the beryl lee of a low little island, brilliantly green, with a blinding white beach. It was a fruitful, drowsy island, the trade-wind fanning it, now, of its heat. Here lived the aborigine, a fisher of schnapper and baramundi, with his wife and swarming family, his thatched habitation secluded in a shady thicket of palm and jungle-growth; and here was he, this day, a stalwart, hairy fellow, disporting himself, with his glistening chocolate children, and his wife, too, in the warm green water, his humor not for fishing, the wind blowing too smartly for his boat to be lazily abroad.

In the season of the Great Hurricane this aborigine was shipped aboard a lugger of eighteen tons to fish the Great Barrier Reef off the Cape York coast for shell and bêche-de-mer. When the big wind came down (said he) it lifted the little lugger clean out of the water—like a leaf in a gale (said he)—and flung her back, capsized and cast away. And so swift was this, and wanton, and complete, and careless, and easy, that the aborigine was greatly astonished: for he had not thought that any wind could accomplish it. It was then near six o'clock of a Saturday evening. And all at once it was dark. The wreck of the lugger vanished in the surprising night and a smother of broken water. What a tur-

moil there was—how the wind tore off the crests of the magical waves and drenched the air with a stifling mist of spray—and what a confusion of noise and movement, and how black, and how white, the rush of the night—the aborigine could not with any art relate: but said, with his eyes popped out, in recollection of the magical performance of that jinkie-jinkie gale, "My word, one big-fellow sea!" He was tossed and driven like a chip of driftwood, all that night (said he): his head was up, his heels were up, he was rolled over and over, he was beaten deep under water, the breath was blown back in his mouth; and he fancied, sometimes, that the wind picked him up with its hands (said he) and cast him through the air, from crest to crest, clear of the sea—which was doubtless true: for the wind was magically strong, and in magical wrath, and magically as sticky as gum.

In the morning the aborigine fell in with his lubra (wife); and the lubra stood by to help him, being a stronger swimmer than he, and a more cunning diver after shell and bêche-de-mer, and more daring and elusive in shark water: so that her value was known to all the masters of luggers out of Thursday Island, and known quite as well, you may be sure, to the aborigine. By and by—dawn long ago come, and noon near, and the wind abating—these two could glimpse the land from the crests of the waves. It was far away—a low, blue line. Yet now, having found themselves, they set out heartily, in about their fourteenth hour in the water, to win the shore. In the afternoon the aborigine began to fail. The thing was too much for him. He lost heart (said he): he was worn out,

and needed food—sleepy, too, with weakness. His anxious little lubra must rest him, now and again—support him while he lay still, and once, indeed, while he nodded off to sleep, and in this way refreshed his strength and spirit. And so they swam together, and paused to rest, and swam on—the woman having no rest at all, but lending strength to the man, at shortening periods, all the while. In the end they crawled up the beach and fell down and slept for a long time. It was then eight o'clock of a Sunday night: they had been in hurricane water a matter of twenty-six hours; and the man would surely have gone down had it not been for the faithful little lubra. And they did not wake up (said the aborigine) until dawn of Monday.

All this while the woman had carried the baby. It was dead, of course—must have died soon in the smother.

"Wouldn't drop it," said the skipper of our sloop.

We watched the aborigine and his lubra leave the warm, green water.

"That little woman?" said I.

"Oh, my word, not at all!" the skipper exclaimed. "The woman went crazy when she woke up in the morning and found her baby dead. And the blackfellow deserted her. *This* one's a *new* one!"

XXXVIII

ACROSS THE CORAL SEA

WE went out from Cairns, Papua bound, across the Coral Sea, in the starlit dark of two o'clock in the morning; and so laden was our little packet, by this time, with cargo in the hold and ponies in the stables betweendecks, and a vast overflow of logs, stowed forward, that the plimsol mark was deep underwater. In gray weather we stepped with care through the Grafton Passage of the Great Barrier Reef—ugly patches of brown water, reaches of perilous green, wide spaces of free blue; and when the gray was blown out of the sky, and the sun was hot upon our decks, the coral was all behind, for the time, and the sea flowing deep and blue. This was the season of the favorable trades: the wind blew fresh, but neither freshened greatly nor fell away, nor would abate or rise, we thought; and the white horses were running to the steady urging of the wind—an exhilarating pace: white manes flying, a swish of speed sounding, and a diamond-dust of spray in the blue air. We ran through a cross-sea, quartering somewhat—with a little splashing lift and a long roll: a rocking, and a whisper of breaking water, and a serene color of sky and sea, and a warmth of sunlight, and a jovial play of wind, all

in a happy concert, and quite easily able to soothe any mood to contentment, and to put the most clamorous anxiety in a tight and far-away limbo of forgetfulness. And thus went all the breezy days and starlit nights of that rolling passage to the half-forgotten destination of Port Moresby of New Guinea.

Barefoot Javanese boys, in bright sarongs, a grave aspect drawn over their disposition to be merry—some of them wrinkled old fellows without teeth—barefoot Javanese served the abundant table. A Dutch provender, this, a Dutch cooking, too, no doubt, in a ship's Dutch oven, and Dutch inventions, every dish, but with notable Javanese improvements, and all slyly mitigated to the palate with the tropical flavors of Java—a cunning application of Javanese art to the substantial Dutch structure of the concoctions, as it were. A happy curiosity, no less than a natural zest, would occupy our thoughts, sometimes, and draw us to the quiet table, in expectation of some new thing, when the great gong boomed—slow and soft and musical, at first, and rising to a clang of command, and beginning to sink to silence, then, with an occasional clap of warning, as if calling us to a religious obligation, which we might neglect at our peril. A slow procession: in that weather, which was an acceptable opiate—sunlight and mist of warm rain and falling dark—we went down to the glittering little saloon with the air of folk stalking to church, but not with the same attitude of spirit. And the ship rolled to port, and rolled to starboard, and rolled to port again, and rolled to starboard once more, all with the regularity and drowsy result of a mother's rocking. And there

were disks of blue sky beyond the open port-holes, on the starboard roll, and disks of blue sea, splashed with white water, on the port roll; and great round beams of sunshine came in, and were like yellow searchlights, slowly moving, never still—and the disks of sea were black, at night, and the disks of sky, too, their dust of stars being lost beyond the bright light we sat in.

Our ship fairly swarmed with barefoot Javanese boys in bright sarongs—old boys and young ones: from the shriveled quartermaster to the captain's midget. And they kept the ship; and the ship was white and shining and sweet—board and brass of it—every expanse and every nook our eyes chanced to search. And they served the long, shady lower deck, which was amidships and roofed with awnings, and they served the sunny upper deck; and without any telling whatsoever, and before a notion of the wish had broken upon our drowsy intelligence, they moved chairs into the sun, and moved chairs out of the sun, and took down awnings to give way to the sun, and put up awnings against the sun, and took 'em down again to let the breeze blow through the shady places. And so softly did they accomplish these affairs, which were awkward enough for the deftest hands that ever you saw at work, that no nod or wink of sleep was interrupted, nor the lightest slumber needlessly disturbed; and such was the deference of their behavior, in general, and so nearly did their apprehension of our needs resemble a magical performance, in the service of the comfort of us all, that we must every one yield to the delight of it and find something to praise in this keeping of a dark-skinned people in a sort of subjection.

And all this while they were content, not sullen, like some natives: being squatted asleep, in out-of-the-way corners, when off watch—so that, prying about, one must not tread on them—or at play on the forward deck, whence their laughter drifted back to us. A slipshod Chinese boy, however, served the smoking-room: the matter of money being intrusted to the Chinese, in all these parts, it seems—who love money more than any others do.

The captain was a young Dutchman, and the chief was a younger Dutchman, and the first officer was a younger Dutchman still; and all the juniors, whether of the bridge or the engine-room, were such very young Dutchmen, indeed, that we wondered how long they had been out of knickerbockers of a voluminous Dutch description, and whence their strut and air of authority, which were surely not derived from their years, and where they had learned the will to challenge responsibility and the manner of seeming able to vanquish every difficulty the sea could present. Not one of them (we thought) but would say, "Pooh!" to a hurricane. The purser, who was the chief steward as well, was a gray Englishman of a threadbare heartiness, which he had worn out, no doubt, in a too-long service in the trades of the East Indies—a great reader of the Greek when he had time (said he); and I fancy that he eased his loneliness, which compelled him to melancholy, poor chap! in a sharp keeping of the ship as clean as a Dutch kitchen. The captain's canaries—a melodious crew in Dutch cages—sang in a language intelligible to anybody, and were in happy fortune all the while, if chirps and trills and flights of song meant anything at all; but the captain's par-

rot was a stupid, loud, illiterate bird, having no command of language, blithering without meaning and at a shocking rate, so that we detested the unaccomplished creature—until the captain told us that the bird spoke excellent Dutch and had mastered a good deal more than the mere matter of profane swearing: whereupon we learned respect for the captain's parrot, and were heartily ashamed of ourselves, resolving never again to be caught in a pitiable lapse like that.

XXXIX

MR. TODD

WE were of one class, which was first-class, to be sure; and this was a jolly good thing—making for a promiscuously jovial behavior, as comfortable to the passage as the drowsy weather was. A busy little two-thousand-ton packet, in a remote trade, like this, with cargo to treat with scrupulous respect, must ignore the proprieties, in respect to the contact of the mighty with the meek, and has neither the time nor the temper nor the room to spare, to exalt the one and cast down the other, in the way of the glittering great world of the P. and O. If she manages a dividing-line—and keeps it drawn and impassable—which favors all white folk with the run of the ship, and confines the inconsiderable black and chocolate and tan and yellow, with the various colors of their admixture, to the invisible seclusion of deck-passage, she does well enough and may honestly advertise the excellence of her accommodations. We were miners, missionaries, planters, adventurers, commercial travelers, civil-service personages, and birds-of-passage; and we were the wives and children of birds-of-passage, civil-service personages, planters, missionaries or miners—the adventurers and commercial travelers among us having

none. There was but one Silver-Tail aboard; and she, the good lady, was so serenely perched, alone in her social altitude, which nobody had the temerity to challenge, and so amiably inclined altogether, in the sleepy heat of the voyage, that we should not have recognized her species, at all, had it not been for the lift of her chin, and the set of her countenance, and the variety and depth of her gowns, when she swept into dinner, a bit late, with a rubicund old father in attendance, and a chip of a son in the wake of both.[1]

Nobody could account for Mr. Todd. The captain was in the dark: the purser was in the dark. Nobody knew where he came from—nobody knew where he was bound for—and had Mr. Todd had his way, I am sure, nobody would have known even so much about him as the inconsequential little fact of his existence. Mr. Todd was a very small, very thin, very carelessly fashioned, pinch-featured bit of a man, with a ragged red mustache, and with thin, pale hair, parted with precision, and compelled with oil to maintain that painful position upon a scalp which was never once wrinkled to relieve it. Mr. Todd had head and heels, of course, and hands, ears, nose, chin, and the like of that: but whether Mr. Todd had eyes or not, nobody knew, except from inference, for you might look at Mr. Todd as often as you liked, and as long as he would let you, and from any angle you chose, or could obtain, but you could never discover any eyes in his head, however patiently, however alertly, you might stalk him

[1] In the Australian bush a Silver-Tail is an incongruously feathered individual of an incongruously aristocratic habit of behavior and utterance—a human individual, of course.

to see; and whether Mr. Todd had a tongue or not, with which he could say more than a startled "Good morning!"—whether he possessed a tongue he could use for more than a moment without completely exhausting it—nobody could find out, though everybody tried. Mr. Todd dressed for these tropics in hot blue serge, and hot black shoes, and hot black-silk shirts, and a hot high celluloid collar (which had sinister designs on his throat), and a hot black cravat, and a hot blue cap; and withal he was clad so heavily, and carried such a weight of watch-chain, that it made one perspire to see him pace the deck.

It was Mr. Todd's custom to pace the deck with an antiquated telescope under his arm and the air of having a moment ago shouldered all the duties of this ticklish navigation; but when Mr. Todd desired to observe what passed—or even to search the empty sea for incident—he would importantly retire to a corner of the smoking-room, seat himself at ease, extend the sections of his telescope to the limit of its enormous length, and take his observation through the opposite port-hole. Mr. Todd occasionally had something of everything at dinner, in a way to fluster the barefoot Javanese boys and amaze all the spectators of his gastronomical achievement; he would begin precisely at the beginning, with no visible evidence of trepidation, but quite the contrary, and go clean through to the end, omitting not an item by the way, and with nothing better to assist him than two bottles of port wine. It was not often that little Mr. Todd settled himself to the performance of this large feat; but when he did—when the undertaking was once under way—he

would carry it off with dignity and retire to his repose. Mr. Todd's repose, moreover, was a mystery of the ship—how he managed to achieve repose in the heat of these nights (without the help of the occasional port wine): for the old fellow in the bright sarong, whose duties positively informed him of the bewildering truth, reported to the steward, who divulged his surprise to the passengers, that it was Mr. Todd's custom to close and screw up his port-hole, upon retiring, and to lock his door, and to stuff the ventilator with a pillow. It was no mystery, after all, perhaps: Mr. Todd stifled himself into a comatose state and survived by being able to come out of it in the nick of time to save his life.

Mr. Todd left us unexpectedly in a port of Java—far away from the Coral Sea.

"Gone!" says the captain, portentously.

"Gone? *Mister Todd!*"

"Mm-m!"

All this, you will presently know, is not in ridicule of Mr. Todd. We were warmly attached to the queer, timid little man, however mean his station, however slender his purse; and we should have heartened his courage—even conspiring cunningly together to this end—had he not started away from us in a fright that was painful to behold. I would not ridicule Mr. Todd. I present him: that is all. And you will find your own Mr. Todd if ever you travel these seas. They are the seas of romance—the windy, blue seas, sunlit and hot, with coral shores and cocoanut islands: so that a man, when his thoughts run away to them, truant from the inimical pressure of his duties, or in disgust with the dull repetitions

of his life, or broken by the fever of it, or desperate with the constraint of it—so that a man says in his heart, "Ah, if I could go there, how quickly I should be healed!" Not one of us but pitied the invalidism of poor little Mr. Todd and heartily wished him the restoration he was searching for in this travel of the tropical Eastern seas. Nor was there any escape from dwelling upon his perilous situation in that strange city—his protracted battle with those odds of nervous fear which must overmaster him in the end. Yet we must admire his spirit: he is surely a good warrior who fights his fight alone in strange places.

XL

QUEST OF ROMANCE

WE who were in no bad way found this voyage of the Coral Sea to our taste. A little packet, this: we were low in the splash and blue roll, close to the sea, which tumbled and broke on a level with us, in a sportive fashion, and in a friendly contact with us, too, touching us sometimes with a jovial shower of spray, and for ever swishing near, like a gossipy fellow of our own company, who might play us a prank the very next moment and break into laughter with us. After breakfast, the morning wind blowing fresh, and the decks cool with washing, the ship was wide awake—all awake, sir, and wide awake, and determined to stay awake. Brisk pacing, now—and shining faces and lusty tones. Mid-morning coming on, this flight of energy suffered its inevitable collapse. The ship sat down—reclined, presently—read a little—nodded a little—was a bit shamefaced to be caught nodding at that hour—but dozed a little, just the same—and at last helplessly succumbed to the languor of the day. It was not until the tea hour was imminent that the ship came again to its waking senses: and then there was a great yawning and stretching, and chatter and stirring about, and many a "Well, well, well!" of amazement

to find the day so far spent—which was precisely what the ship exclaimed yesterday at precisely the same hour, and would exclaim to-morrow, with precisely the same degree of astonishment. But one day of the seven—Cairns to Papua and back to Thursday Island—was lived wide awake: the day of the sports—the crew competing, and the passengers contributing nothing more to exhaust them in that heat than laughter and applause.

At night—the dark of the moon—the long lower deck was a lively, cozy little corner of the big world. Light overflowed it. Big black seas ran into the yellow glow, like children bent upon [illegible] mischief, and broke all at once in a noisy flurry of white, and scampered away, although delighted with the notion that they had caused a considerable amount of consternation. They made mischief enough on the night of the masquerade, choosing that night, of all nights, like naughty boys, to be troublesome: they came inboard—a troupe of them—and flooded the deck, and drenched the dancers, and incommoded the piano, and put an end to the festivities before midnight. The young Dutch captain was indignant with this obstreperous behavior—and the young Dutch chief, too, and all the young juniors; and although the captain did not express the intention, in so many words, his grim attitude might easily have led one to fancy that he would take the matter up in the morning, when he had commanded his ill-temper, and could administer correction with the best parental discretion. Whatever he did about it—which was possibly nothing at all—after the great occasion of the masquerade the sea did not once lapse from manners of the most charming desc[illegible]-

tion. Every night, on the long lower deck, the wicker chairs were grouped, and tables were out for cards and dominoes and chess; and the lights glowed—the awnings flopped—the piano tinkled—and the best wear of them all was displayed—and there was a happy clatter and laughter until long past twelve o'clock.

Through all these mild gaieties a faded little lady fluttered like a butterfly of impoverished attractions—sipping drops of wit and laughter and ponderous conversation so avidly that it seemed she could never sip her full: being all the while so restless and eager that her opportunity for enjoyment was damaged by sheer fear that some drops of all that abundant honey would escape her. She had come by way of Sydney (said she) from an island of the South Seas, where she had lived many years with her husband, the manager of a plantation, and his two white helpers and their wives and children; and she was bound, now, in the high spirits of a better expectation, to rejoin her husband in the midst of the East Indies, where he was newly become the manager of another plantation, near the Line—an island more remote and savage than she had left, and a life more lonely, since her husband was the only white man there and she was to be the only white woman. And now was the amazing interval—a brief flight through the crowd and merriment of the world, as through a patch of sunshine or a lighted room. It was to be observed that as the voyage progressed the faded little lady progressively yielded to the new customs. Mrs. Silver-Tail patronized her. Doubtless that good lady whispered, "My dear,

they do it *everywhere!*" Presently, at any rate, the faded little lady began to repair the ravages of a tropical climate with innocent little touches of rouge. Indeed, she was a radiant little creature, and owed the rouge no thanks: her eyes were bright, her smile broke honestly, and her chatter was crisp with little trills of laughter.

Our missionaries were going together to the Roper River district of Australia to teach the savage aborigines of that horrible country the elements of Christianity and the first principles of agriculture. The one was a dry, pale, grave man, coming elderly in age, with a slow, precise habit of speech, which frequently lapsed into ungrammatical forms. He had been a haberdasher's shopman (said he); but was now—having undergone a violent religious experience some years before—most earnestly intent upon communicating his philosophy to the bestial inhabitants of the Roper River wilderness. For this employment he had painstakingly fitted himself according to the requirements; and being here close upon his work, at last, he was a happy fellow, considerably subdued by a heavy sense of responsibility. His companion was a lusty young minister, in a clerical vest and collar—a great, hearty, laughing chap, loving a jest and a dinner, and not disinclined, you may be sure, toward the physical adventures of the life into which he was going. They knew little of savage customs, less of the country, and not a word of aboriginal dialect; but they were confidently persuaded that time and industry would yield them knowledge, and that this hard task, to which they had addressed themselves with pleased courage, would issue in a sufficient triumph. A term of com-

plete isolation confronted them—I recall it as seven years; and we wondered concerning the inspiration of these men—that they should freely submit their lives to this prolonged hardship.

Our adventurers were five young men, bound to Thursday Island, traveling as gentlemen, who had come all this way in search of profit, which must offer itself, however, as an addition to the delights of romantic adventure or be rejected. There was young Smith: he led—an American who had roughed it in Western Australia, in his time, having once (said he) bought a train of camels, from an individual with the dry-horrors, and profitably pursued the business of transporting water in the dry-lands until the adventure ran out its sands of interest and he must be away to the Klondike to renew his zest. In Alaska, young Smith rescued young Jones from a hanging predicament, having to do with the sale of a mining claim, and struck a partnership with the spirited chap. In Alabama, young Smith and young Jones encountered young Robinson; and as young Robinson had nothing to do, and would do nothing irksome, he was easily persuaded to join fortunes with young Smith and young Jones, who promised him no dull employment. In Paris, Smith and Jones and Robinson fell in with young Thompson, an Englishman. Thompson was engaged in the study of architecture; he abandoned it for good and all when Smith pointed out that diving for pearls out of Thursday Island was a more lively and lucrative occupation. In London, Smith and Jones and Robinson and Thompson, then outfitting for the South Sea trade, chanced into the convivial company of young Johnson; and as young

Johnson's family desired his absence from London, and was willing to procure it at a price, provided the distance was considerable, the matter of his enlistment was quickly arranged.

It was a pretty plan: the design and specifications could not have been more alluring had the young architect of the party been an accomplished architect of romantic futures for young gentlemen—had he been directed to indulge his fancy as he pleased. What deep talk there was in the Paris café and London bar—what laughter and expectant toasts—every man will know who has been young; and he will know, too, what visions of pleasant happenings to come, where the free ends of the earth are, fashioned themselves in the mists of smoke—the wishes of youth, abundantly to realize themselves in romance. In the hold of the Dutch packet, here, at last, crossing the Coral Sea, was the trade: gin and trinkets and tobacco and bright cloth—the like of that. And there was also a second-hand diving outfit. They would buy a lugger (said they); and they would sail her themselves, with the help of a Japanese skipper, and they would fish the Great Barrier Reef, and the coral of the Torres Strait, for shell and pearl. Suppose that failed: then they would trade the wild islands- they had designs on Timor, I recall—for copra, meanwhile secretly planting cocoanut-trees, when opportunity arose, to the riches of which they would return after seven years, as to a buried treasure. And suppose that failed: then they would load the lugger with savages and curios and sail her across the Pacific to San Francisco in time to grow rich as merchants and showmen at the Panama Exposition.

"Suppose you can't *do* that?"

"Well," says Smith, the leader, "*I* can cook for a living."

They were come for good, at any rate. It was a desperate adventure. There was no return. Except for cash sufficient to buy the lugger, the fortunes of them all were expended in trade and passage-money. A miscalculation — a misfortune — would cast them every one on the beach. And the desperate character of the thing was indicated by the habit and behavior of the young architect. He was a young architect no longer; he was a full-grown desperado— his sweater and scowl, and his expectation of offense and trickery, and his swagger and potations, and his bulging hip-pocket. Already he had accumulated a despised past—early years of mild and sheltered life. No gentleman's existence now, you may believe! A bucaneerish life in a world without law! It was agreeable to contemplate the young architect, indeed: it was a pretty child's play—he was young, and he was in earnest, and he was approaching the frontiers of romance. It was he who directed the physical preparation of the party for the nearing adventure; and he was like a trainer of athletes—an implacable fellow. Every afternoon he fetched his crew to the deck for exercise; and he put them in a circle, and had them toss a medicine-ball, and bade them lie flat on their backs and lift their heels in the air, and directed them to lie flat on their bellies and lift their weight with their hands and toes, and in other ways familiar to a gymnasium sought to accomplish their well-being—a violent measure in that heat.

What came of it all I do not know. When we

left Thursday Island the price of pearling-luggers had mysteriously risen to precisely that amount of cash which the adventurers possessed.

"Hard luck!" says we. "What you going to do?"

"I'll wait," says Smith.

A shrewd American! They waited.

XLI

PAPUA

BY and by the little Dutch packet accomplished the passage of the Coral Sea and was tied up at the wharf at Port Moresby. It is still cannibal country—Papua: the British New Guinea of recent times and unsavory memory. Aboard the packet, lying in the brilliant, colorful little harbor of Port Moresby, and ashore, in the deep tropical shade, with the sun shut out and the breeze let in, singular tales are told of murder and magic. The half of Papua—the whole being a matter of ninety thousand square miles of swamp-land, hardly accessible jungle, frosty plateaus, and considerable mountains, lying a bit under the Line—has not been explored; and what remains (except the patches of settled country, near the sea) is not so familiarly known that no mystery attaches to its physical characteristics and savage customs. True, the land is open to settlement—a fertile, lovely tropical country, but aggravating to white blood, in the way of all new tropical lands. It is not now a Crown colony; it is administered under the Australian Commonwealth—a patient, industrious, cunning, God-fearing administration, moreover, imposing civilization in no violent way, but adapting it, and cherishing,

in an unusual experiment, the preservation and enlightenment of the native races, who thrive in the benign sphere of influence, above the wanton advantage of the settlers and trading adventurers. White inhabitants there are, to be sure, in slowly increasing numbers, a thousand, in round numbers, nowadays, occupied with planting, mining, and trading, the planters exporting chiefly cocoanuts, rubber, and sisal hemp; and of the natives it is roughly estimated that there are four hundred thousand, in widely scattered and mutually unfriendly tribes, speaking many languages and dialects, and frankly given, in the remoter parts, to the enjoyment of murder and the practice of the ancient cannibal customs. Notwithstanding these disproportionate numbers and established customs, and in spite of the amazing point of view in relation to the taking of life, a white man is reasonably secure, so surely and heavily has the hand of the law fallen upon offenders. Provided a man walk circumspectly through the familiar places, with some small notion of propriety in respect to native property, dignity, and wives, he need go in no very grave fear of being boiled and eaten; but let him venture far afield, where the law is not and the emphasis of the government's disapprobation is unknown, and let him prove himself a truculent fellow the while—he may then save himself from the boiling-pot and broiling-stones as best his wit and courage can manage.

"It is not," a planter explained, with no glint of amusement, "that a New Guinea native *prefers* a white man, for whom, as a matter of fact, he has a considerable distaste."

"Distaste!" we exclaimed, in astonishment. "Why?"

"Well, you see," the planter replied, "a white man is salty. And naturally, too, he tastes disagreeably of tobacco. You couldn't expect anything else, could you?"

Little is known—much from inference, perhaps, nothing surely, from intelligent contact—of what lies "beyond the mountains," in the far-away, unexplored places. And this region of mystery engages the horrified speculation of the natives of the coastal regions as well as the interest of the white inhabitants of the Territory. It is recorded by a magistrate of the Rigo district, for example, that there is declared to be a village of women with tails in the direction of Mount Brown. A native informed the Administrator of the Territory, as the Administrator relates, that there is, at any rate, a race of tailed *men* "beyond the mountains." "I *know*," said he, "that tailed men live beyond the mountains." "*How* do you know?" the Administrator inquired. "I *ate* one," was the native's sufficient reply. Another native, according to the Administrator, protested that he was perfectly well aware of the existence and place of habitation of these tailed men. Taken in his garden, said he, he had been carried captive to the very village of tailed men; and he had lived there, for many weeks, and had acquainted himself with the customs of the tribe, who were so indubitably possessed of tails, indeed, that they had bored holes in the floors of their houses, which were elevated upon piles, so that, to squat comfortably, when at home, it was their custom to thrust their tails through these

apertures and dangle them, unconstrained, in the space below. The captive, with his very own eyes, had observed them do this very thing: and not only had he observed the comfortably disposed appendages, he had himself slipped under the houses, upon occasion, and softly, very softly, tied a knot in each dangling tail. It was his pleasure in this way to annoy the tailed men. In response to his outcry that an enemy approached, the tailed men would leap to their feet; and it was vastly amusing (said he) to observe their behavior when the knots brought them back to their haunches with a jerk. Tailed men? Of course there were tailed men! How in the world, it may be inquired, could the captive have tied knots in the tails of the tailed men if the tailed men *had* no tails? It is a fair illustration of the fearsome regard in which the New Guinea native holds the unknown regions—a fair illustration, too, of the quality of the logic of the New Guinea native.

Papua has long been known as a bloody land. It is a bloody land still. But the blood of white men is rarely let; and the wanton slaughter of natives, the one by the other—at least in those fast widening regions which are within the sphere of the law—is fast diminishing. All this being so, in one year, nevertheless, when there were two hundred and fifteen prisoners committed for trial, one hundred and eighteen of them were charged with murder, nine with manslaughter, and five with attempted murder. To the civilized mind, the motives to murder, shocking enough, to be sure—nor wanting an aspect of gruesome humor—are upon occasion incredible. As they are matters of record, however,

disclosed upon painstaking investigation, they are to be accepted, not as irresponsible tales, such as wander about the Eastern seas, but as substantial facts, however singular and incomprehensible they may appear. It is a matter of court record, for example, that certain natives of what is called the Coast Range, being upon trial for the murder of two carriers whose throats they had cut, admitted the deed, without the least hesitation, and sought to justify the ghastly business upon the ground that the carriers had appeared to be "cold and hungry"—dejected fellows, far away from their village. The prisoners had not eaten the carriers. They had merely—with the most considerate expedition—cut the throats of the carriers, who were strangers, at any rate, and therefore of no great consequence; and no ingenuity of cross-questioning could elicit a motive ulterior to the one so ingenuously advanced—that the carriers, appearing to be "cold and hungry," were, in the opinion of the gentlemen who had incontinently cut their throats, much better dead. A similar case of merciful extermination concerned a young native, employed to shoot game for a white planter, who encountered a sick man (Papuan) on the road, near by a river, and strangled him to death. Upon trial he explained that the sick man had created annoyance, and a considerable embarrassment, as well, by insistently requesting to be carried across the river to the other side, whence his way lay forward to his village.

"Quite so," said the presiding officer. "Why, then, *didn't* you carry him across the river?"

"He was too heavy," replied the native. "It would have put me to a great deal of trouble."

"Why did you *kill* him?"

"What else could I do? The man was sick."

It was out of the question to endure the labor of carrying the sick man across the river. It was equally out of the question to abandon the pitiable object. Therefore the bewildered fellow had strangled him—the most obvious way out of a dilemma which bade fair to distress his feelings.

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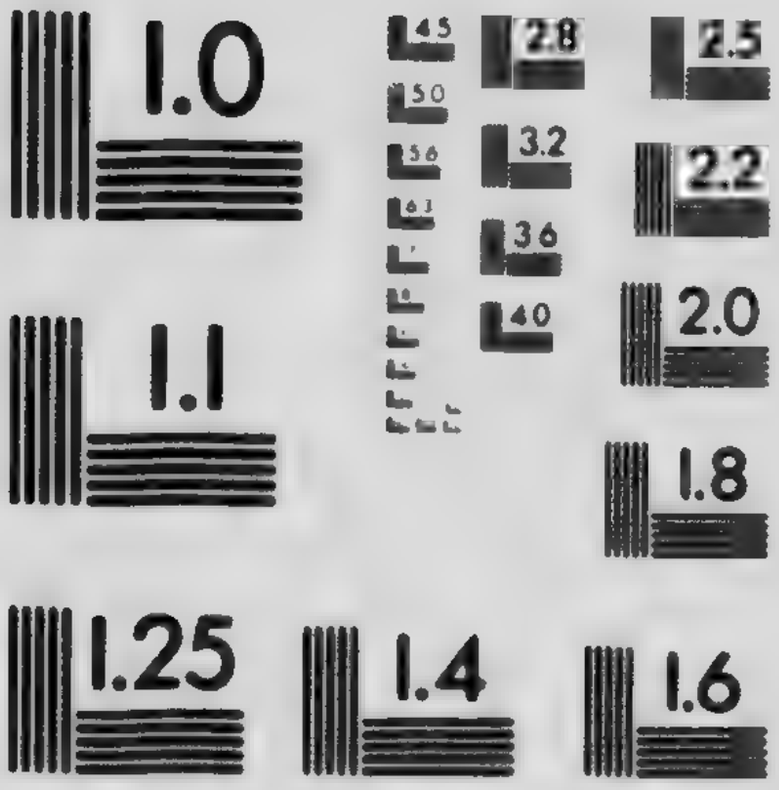

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XLII

CASUAL MURDER

TWO natives of a village near Ukaudi were charged before a magistrate with the murder of a man of Ukaudi. True, they had killed him. No: he had not offended them. Animosity had had nothing to do with the affair. As a matter of fact they had never seen the man before. They had killed him, said they, to oblige an amiable stranger, with whom they had pleasantly fallen in, and who, desiring this death for reasons of his own, which were doubtless sufficient, had entreated them to accomplish the little favor. A Northern native, apprehended for the murder of his aged father, confessed that he had killed him. Oh, yes—he had killed his father, all right! *Why* had he killed his father? "The old man," he replied, "wasn't much good"—and no other motive could be elicited. Another native explained that his victim had "talked too much"—bored him altogether beyond endurance. "He talked and talked," said he, "until I couldn't stand it any longer. And so I killed him." It was a similar propensity that inspired a native to beat his wife nearly to death. "Her tongue never ceased," he told the magistrate, "and as she troubled me seriously, I beat her." Another native, upon trial

for a murderous assault upon his wife, the death of the woman having been nearly accomplished, explained: "I was in a hurry to go to school. My wife was slow in bringing my reading-book." A village constable, one Baruga of Baipa—the Territory is policed by native constables, after a fashion, and in a restricted way, under the close direction of the magistrates—was taken in custody, charged with leading a murderous raid against a near-by community, a crime of which he was clearly guilty. He had been for some years in the service: he was described "in the books" as "a good man." There was no reason why he should have organized this bloody expedition except that he had had nothing else to do —no other pleasure in prospect. And sheer ennui, indeed, is said to have been the cause of his lapse from grace. Dull days follow upon the advent of the law: the women do the work of the world; a man of spirit must employ his energies—must entertain himself—somehow.

"Sheer ennui," says the Administrator, "has been the motive in many similar instances."

Sheer ennui, indeed, involves the Papuan in a great deal of difficulty. Invited all at once to give a new direction to his energies—the thing is doubtless both incomprehensible and unattractive—he finds it difficult to adjust himself to the new conditions of enjoyment. After the sanguinary delights of the raid and the man-hunt, what joy can indenture to a planter afford, and how, in the secure, dull villages, can time hang anything but heavily? The Papuan *must* have distraction. It is not an amusing incident of administration: it is a grave problem. The Administrator once tried two natives from the

mountains back of Rigo for throwing spears at the police. It was a serious offense. The police must not be molested; and the Papuans knew it—knew that the diverting sport had gravely endangered them. Nevertheless, they pleaded guilty. The Administrator explained—through several interpreters, to make sure of driving the admonition home—that the Papuans must never again throw spears at the police. To his amazement the Papuans asked that they might be hanged. "But why?" inquired the Administrator. "Throwing spears at the police is the only pleasure we have left," replied the Papuans, disconsolately. "You have said that we must not throw spears at the police any more. Let us be hanged. We do not want to live any longer." The constable who led the murderous raids for lack of other entertainment was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment. Other lapses of the police have been punished less severely. I recall the case of Karara, sometime village constable, a man whose record was dark, who had led raids in the Delta, and who, in search of acceptable excitement, had taken part in a deal of tribal fighting. For his misdeeds (he was probably never caught red-handed) he "was deprived of his clothes"—a degradation of consequence and a brutal blow to his vanity. It was no light punishment. The Papuan is devoted to the wearing of clothes—so devoted to the new fashion, indeed, that the government goes to great lengths of alarm in discouragement of the vicious practice.

Wearing clothes is emphatically discouraged by the administration. The fashion, indeed, is condemned with temper. One magistrate goes the

GAUDY HEAD-DRESSES AND WILD-BEATING DRUMS MARK THE CEREMONIAL DANCE

length of declaring that "the curse of rags" should forthwith be prohibited by law—that it should be made a criminal offense for a native to wear more than a loin-cloth and a woman to adorn herself with anything more voluminous and unsanitary than a brief grass skirt. I do not know what part the missionaries have in encouraging the native population to clothe its perfectly inoffensive nakedness. In Port Moresby, I recall, a shocking contrast to the modest native attire of the women who were unloading the packet while we lay at the wharf, was presented by a group of their idle sisters, who appeared each in a loose garment commonly known, I believe, as a Mother Hubbard. It was something to laugh at, to be sure—the flirtatious vanity and grotesque appearance of these ample maidens. It was revolting, too. One might search the open world in vain for a more striking exhibition of immodesty; and one jumped to the conclusion that the missionaries were in fault—that the benevolent folk at Home had sought to further missionary endeavor in a cannibal country by contributing the civilizing influence of these discarded Mother Hubbards. Yet I fancy that the missionaries, who are far wiser than the comic supplements allow, were not in the least to blame—that the traders were at the bottom of this unhappy change in costume. Clothes are worn by the New Guinea native with no degree of circumspection. They are never taken off—except to be traded; and consequently, being counted articles of trade, they pass from hand to hand, from district to district, proceeding from the settlements to the far-away regions, leaving a trail of contamination to mark their course. Where the natives take

to them "to an immoderate degree" (the reports declare), there is an alarming increase in "the lung disease." The object of a discerning administration seems to be a paradoxical attempt to civilize the native without interrupting his healthfully naked condition.

XLIII

THE CORPSE AND THE CONSTABLE

SOME of the New Guinea murders—to return to the matter of casual blood-letting—are done in mere childish explosions of temper. They indicate what manner of difficulty the administration encounters in dealing with a fixed and traditional propensity to shed blood. How cheap life is—how inconsequential its taking! And how amazingly insecure life was before the occupation and fast-growing pacification of the land! And by what a slender thread it still hangs in the remoter, still savage parts! A mere momentary lapse from caution—and life is lost. "One man"—runs a report—"irritated because a baby would not stop crying, killed, not the baby, but his own mother; and I remember a case in which a man split open the head of another because he could not find his knife. So cases happen of accidental wounding, caused by the habit these people have of discharging arrows at random when they have a headache or feel otherwise out of sorts." On Rossel Island they punish a thief by killing the woman who cooks his food. In some cases the wife of the thief is killed. In Port Moresby they relate a plain tale of murder done with no other motive than to relieve the feelings. It illustrates, in a meas-

ure, the inclination of a civilized man, being in a rage, to kick something—to "take it out of somebody." Two brothers, it seems, owned a most charming pig. And they loved that pig. And the pig fell sick and died. To assuage their grief they sallied forth and killed an unsuspecting member of a neighboring tribe. The victim had never seen the pig—had never even heard of the bereaved brothers. Had he been acquainted with the pig, and had he been acquainted with the brothers, and had he known that the brothers were approaching, and that the pig was dead, he would doubtless have taken to his heels with what expedition he could command. It was their custom, said the brothers, upon trial, to kill somebody, anybody, when a particularly beloved pig died. Had they killed this man? To be sure!—the pig had died, and it was the custom. The magistrate remarks that they were "still sighing like furnaces" over the loss of the beloved when they were led away to jail.

All the common motives obtain in New Guinea as elsewhere. A man kills his enemy because he hates him—a blood feud, an altercation, a quarrel over a woman (or a pig). And there are a number of peculiar inspirations. In some districts, an assassination, for example, privileges a young man to wear a certain feather, in others the beak of a horn-bill; and it is not to be wondered at that coveting this badge of valor—it is, of course, awe-inspiring and highly attractive to the maidens of the villages—brings many a young fellow under the high displeasure of the law. A prisoner who had killed a white man—a very rare occurrence—explained that "whenever he wanted tobacco he killed a white

AN ATTACK UPON NATIVE TREE-DWELLERS

man." In a swift punishment of this magical process the man was hanged. Certain inland natives, brought to trial before the Administrator for an attack upon a body of police, were greatly astonished to find themselves charged with a heinous offense. They had never seen a policeman before, they said; and they did not know what policemen were—nor particularly liked the looks of them. "If," said they, apologetically, "we had for a moment imagined that you attached any value to these persons, we should not have dreamed of hurting them. We did not think they were any good." A certain Hariki, of the Port Moresby neighborhood, built himself a new house, which he wished to paint with a mixture of red clay and cocoanut-oil. As custom forbade him to employ this mixture, however, until he had killed a man, he set forth and murdered a white man. That he had no grudge against the victim, who had admirably served his purpose, is obvious. He sought, indeed, by every means in his power—he had some skill in incantation—to charm the dead man back to life, and succeeded, said he, with the legs, but, though he continued his incantations diligently, even until nightfall, he could make no impression above the mortal wound in the chest. What is the administration to do (it has been asked) with folk of such simplicity?—who regard the taking of life as a feat of valor, a necessity of custom, a traditional distraction—a matter of no consequence whatsoever.

A Resident Magistrate visited a mountain tribe in whose territory a number of carriers had mysteriously vanished.

"You killed the men?"

"Oh yes."

"You must not do it any more, you know."

"But, sir," the villagers protested, "the men were merely strangers."

"In the sight of the government, it is quite as grave an offense to kill a stranger," the Magistrate admonished them, imparting a bit of shocking information, "as it is to kill anybody else."

It is altogether probable that the newly enlightened villagers were thereafter guided by this perfectly fresh information. That the natives are at least occasionally moved to live in respect of the law, when they are aware of its requirements, is shown, at any rate, in the case of the Kuni mountaineers, who came four days' journey to Kairuku to inquire of the magistrate if a widow might marry again, the village constable, a native, being in doubt. In the Sinaketa district, a village constable, reasoning from what meager knowledge he had of the bewildering regulations of the government, in respect to the ordinary affairs of life—though, indeed, the poor fellow must have been sorely puzzled by the extraordinary circumstances—saved the villagers from a slight error of behavior. The funeral of a middle-aged man was in progress. Near the grave the middle-aged man complained of discomfort. It was found, upon taking him back to the house, and unwrapping the mats with which he was swathed, that what he wanted was a banana. Having disposed of one banana, he demanded another; and having disposed of the second, he reclined, seeming now to be satisfied and dead beyond doubt. Laid in his grave, however, he complained again. It was annoying. The middle-aged man was putting his relatives to

"shame." It was the sentiment of the village that he should be buried, anyhow. With this the village constable (a native) heartily agreed, speaking as a man, but pointed out, speaking as a constable, that, humiliating as the situation of the family unquestionably was, the government would "make trouble" if the man were buried alive. The middle-aged man, being indulgently returned to his home, demanded, this time, a drink of water, and having drunk, once more reclined, as though beyond all mortal concerns. At the same time, in a neighboring house, the relatives, whom the middle-aged man was scandalizing by his obstreperous behavior, consulted together. Eventually it was proposed to procure the consent of the middle-aged man to the seemly progress of his own funeral by tightly winding a cord around his neck.

"No," said the village constable. "It would annoy the government."

"But why?" the relatives demanded, like children.

"I don't know," the constable replied. "Yet I am sure that the government would be annoyed if you prepare the man for burial by winding a cord around his neck."

"Well, then," said the relatives, "what are we to do?"

"Wait awhile," replied the cunning constable, "and see what happens."

What chiefly concerned the relatives of the middle-aged man was not the "shame" to which the middle-aged man was putting them by interrupting his own funeral. It was this: that the body of the middle-aged man was unduly restraining the spirit from its flight. "He wishes to go," they said; "we don't

want to hold him back—we want to help him to go." Next day—all this from a report of the magisterial investigation—the middle-aged man's spirit succeeded in loosing the bonds of the flesh and escaping to its place of desire.

XLIV

CANNIBAL COUNTRY

BLOODTHIRSTY as these natives are, and genuinely incapable of comprehending why life should not be taken, a discreet white man is safe in the land, so successful has the native policy of the administration proved in practice—a policy of the reasonable and patient dealing out of justice rather than of wholesale retaliation in the form of punitive expeditions. "It would probably be quite safe for a white man to travel unarmed from the Purari Delta to the German boundary," says the Administrator—"far safer than to walk at night through parts of some of the cities of Europe and Australia." Not long ago, however, as time runs in new places, it was as much as a man's life was worth to land helpless on the coast. Traders and missionaries were slaughtered and eaten. The ill fame of New Guinea was celebrated and well won. It was a feat of considerable daring to penetrate the forest—even to lie carelessly at anchor off the coast. It is this New Guinea—now comparatively a land of peace and a measure of fertile promise—that remains alive in the popular imagination. A score of shocking tales, current in Port Moresby, might be told to illustrate the recent precariousness of life in a land where an

unarmed man may now walk as safe as in some slum quarters of an Australian city. As a matter of fact, the first traders led adventurous lives—gave and took death, always in a highly thrilling fashion, and sometimes in a way almost humorously diverting to read about. A group of Chinamen, *bêche-de-mer* fishermen, for example, having brought themselves into peril of massacre, sought to impress the natives with the deadly efficacy of their firearms. To this end they set up a sheet-iron target and impressively peppered away at it. Unfortunately they missed it every time—at a distance of thirty yards. Perceiving this, the natives, to display a superior skill, cast spears at the target, and scored with unfailing accuracy; and having thus proved their own superiority, upon trial of the weapons, they attacked the Chinamen, killed every man-jack of them, and ate them every one.

Cannibalism is, of course, practised in New Guinea to this day. Some of the remoter tribes would doubtless be amazed to learn that it is regarded with disfavor in any quarter of the wide world. A man consumes his victim. In some districts, however, he must not consume his own victim; he may distribute his own victim—but must himself partake of the victim of a generously inclined friend. The administration has put an end to the thing within the limited sphere of its influence—has put an end to the freedom of village raiding, moreover, and has pretty thoroughly discouraged the murder of one individual by another. Cases of cannibalism, however, still come before the court; and they are dealt with, I believe—it is said to be an exceedingly difficult matter to deal with them at

all—under that section of the criminal code which relates to body-snatching. The incidents are far too revolting for description—the boiling and broiling and barter of the victims. The time-worn joke about the missionary and the cannibal king is really in bad taste: the business is no laughing matter—not when one comes close to it. Some of the Papuan tribes are not cannibals; some protest a horrified loathing of the practice; and some, formerly accustomed, have now abandoned the custom, in response to the teaching of the missionaries, or in deference to the attitude of the administration. It may be said, in a general way, that the cannibal is a cannibal because he has a taste for that sort of thing. It is a food to which he inclines. Why waste it? he inquires. It may be that he consumes some small part of a departed relative because he has dearly loved that relative and desires openly to demonstrate his duty and affection; and it may be that he partakes of a ceremonial feast because custom indicates that to partake in such circumstances is a matter of high privilege and imperative propriety. The opinion is, however, that cannibalism is not, generally speaking, a ceremonial affair, but a mere consumption of a certain sort of food with which the cannibal wishes to sustain life and tickle his palate.

"I understand," a resident informed us, "that women are not particularly edible."

We suggested that this was a singular thing.

"They do all the work," the resident explained, "and are, consequently, lean and tough."

A more or less palatable classic of New Guinea cannibalism describes the fate of no less than three

hundred and twenty-six wretched Chinamen. It has been reasonably authenticated by a cursory investigation of one of the Administrators of the Territory; and there is no good reason—it jumps precisely with the habits of some of the savage natives—to question the truth of it. It seems that the three hundred and twenty-six Chinamen, having been cast away in the Louisdale Archipelago, and in this way marooned on a small island, were discovered in their helpless state by the natives of that region. One by one, as occasion required, they were taken off and eaten, until, as might be inferred, the natives were surfeited. Upon this the remaining Chinamen were hawked along the coast—exchanged, as might again be inferred, for more palatable food and for desirable articles of every description. One, however, escaped; and this survivor, it is related in one of the *Annual Reports*, was picked up, four months after the wreck of his vessel, by a French steamer, and carried to Melbourne, whence he made his way to the gold-fields of Victoria, and was eventually arrested upon the charge of selling liquor without a license. It is not to be inferred from this incident that all Papuans are cannibals—that cannibalism flourishes as once it did. As a matter of fact, cannibalism is all the while diminishing; it has been put down in the settled places, driven to close cover on the edge of civilization, and is practised in the free, ancient fashion, without reproach—as when the three hundred and twenty-five Chinamen were disposed of—only in those rather extensive regions to which the white influence has not authoritatively extended. One does not expect to rub elbows with a cannibal in the little capital of Port Moresby.

One may, of course; but the cannibal will wear no mark of his degradation—flowers in his hair, rather, and armlets of gay blossoms, and a garland around his neck.

To the infliction of punishment as a measure of correction the childish simplicity of the New Guinea native is something of a barrier. Natives have been known to accuse themselves of murder and ask to be dealt with according to the law. "I have told you already," said an impatient magistrate to a village (native) constable, who had brought in a self-accused murderer, "that there must be an eye-witness of the crime." "I told him so," the constable replied; "but he killed the man and ate him—and he *says* so." "Don't care *what* he says," roared the magistrate; "he can't get justice in this court before he's able to prove it!" An experience of a magistrate on patrol in the Gwoira Range precisely illustrates the difficulty which the perverse simplicity of the native attitude of mind toward reasonable information opposes to the administration of the law. In this instance, however, the law had nothing to do with the matter: it is a mere example of native incomprehension. It seems that the natives of the Gwoira Range had in some way persuaded themselves that they could swallow the white man's bullets and thus escape dan[illegible] The magistrate inquired if this were so. "It is perfectly true," replied one of the natives. "I can do it myself." Upon this the magistrate loaded his rifle and explained to the native that if he should by any unhappy chance be unable to "eat" the bullet it would surely kill him. "Now, open your mouth," he continued, "and I will shoot the bullet down your

throat." The native opened his mouth—all unconcerned. To demonstrate the effect of a discharge the magistrate shot the bullet through a log and triumphantly indicated the devastation. The native examined the aperture of entrance and the aperture of exit. Undoubtedly the bullet had gone clean through the log. The magistrate once more loaded his rifle. "Now, open your mouth," said he, "and swallow the bullet if you dare." And the native opened his mouth. Naturally, the magistrate, outraged and nonplussed by this amazing perversity, and appalled by its implications, concludes his story with the inquiry: What in the world is one to make of such people—what is one to *do* with them?

Well, what is one to do with a cannibal? It would not be fair to hang him. Upon reflection, as a matter of fact, it would be an outrage. He is obedient to the immemorial custom—not consciously a breaker of any comprehensible law. And he is not hanged. He is imprisoned for a spell. And what is one to do with a murderer in a land where murder is very much of a pastime and an exercise? A native who kills a white man is hanged as a matter of course. There is nothing else to do. But no expedition is despatched—it is a remarkable thing, come to think of it—to slaughter the half of his tribe. A measure of that sort is held by the present beneficent administration to be the very extremity of injustice and unwisdom. Native murderers of natives are sent to jail for terms varying from twelve months to seven years. The fact that life has always been cheap in New Guinea—that to take life has not been in the native catalogue of capital crime, and that the

mysteries of civilization are new and difficult—is mercifully taken into account. In some cases a term in jail is a severe punishment. In others, it seems, it is a form of relaxation. A few years in confinement, perhaps, is no great hardship—except that it deprives the prisoner of the company of his village; and it may be said, approximating a general truth, that the prisoners cherish the importance of their state—as on Rossel Island, for example, where the Resident Magistrate does not find it necessary to lock up his prisoners (incarcerated for minor offenses), but bids them remain in an open shed until he gives them word to go. At Daru, a native gave himself up to a magistrate and desired to be sent to jail forthwith. "What have you done?" the magistrate inquired. The native replied: "Nothing." "Why, then," said the magistrate, "should I send you to jail?"

"The mosquitoes are so bad!" said the native.

XLV

SORCERERS' WORK

WE learned in Port Moresby that the practice of sorcery is proscribed in New Guinea. In the lower courts, there, which are regularly constituted British tribunals, having been arraigned upon the charge of exercising witchcraft, sorcerers are frequently convicted, upon the evidence presented, of this singular breach of the law. "You don't *hang* these men!" the native victim of the profession complains. And he expresses this natural astonishment: "If you were to hang all the sorcerers, there would be no sorcerers left to trouble either you or us. Why *don't* you hang them? Are you afraid of them?"—an awkward question. There would be more sorcery trials—many more convictions, as a matter of course—if it were not for the difficulty of commanding clear evidence of guilt. "I know that the man is a sorcerer, and that he magically killed my friend's brother, and I can prove it, too, and if I testify the man will be sent to jail," the astute native mind argues; "but if the man is convicted and sent to jail upon my testimony, what devilish spell will he put upon me when he gets out?"—and discretion issues in silence. In the Delta country, not long since, there was a sorcerer of reputation so fearsome—he may still be at large and flourishing—that the natives of the villages dared not speak his

name above a whisper. It would be a rash adventure to undertake the conviction of this celebrated Bai-i of Vaimuru upon the evidence of the shivering wretches within his sphere of magical activity. Convictions are sometimes procured, however, of less noted sorcerers, after fair trial, in an informal way; and upon occasion the testimony is of a sort to shock the ears even of a magistrate who has long got past being stirred by the usual Papuan surprises.

A sorcerer was brought to trial for the atrocious murder of a native of one of the inland villages. He would neither affirm nor deny that he was a sorcerer. Indeed, he regarded the whole proceeding with supercilious indifference.

"Did you see the prisoner strike Dabura?" a native witness was asked, as a paraphrased transcript of the recorded testimony may run.

"Dabura was struck with a club. The prisoner did it."

"Was it a heavy blow?"

"Dabura was killed."

"How do you know that Dabura was dead?"

"Dabura fell. The prisoner struck him again and again on the head with a club. Dabura could have been alive. He was dead."

"Describe the effect of the blows."

"They killed Dabura. Dabura's head was broken open. Dabura was covered with blood. The ground where he lay was soaked with blood. I know a dead man when I see one. Dabura was dead."

"What did the prisoner do then?"

"He called two other sorcerers. The three sorcerers together worked charms over Dabura."

"What was the effect of these charms?"

"Dabura came to life."

"What!"

"Dabura came to life and stood up. I know that he came to life and stood up. I saw him stand up."

"With his skull crushed?"

"Oh no! Dabura's skull was no longer crushed. It was perfectly healed. The sorcerers had charmed it quite whole again."

"Was Dabura weak from loss of blood?"

"Oh, there was no loss of blood! There was no blood on Dabura. There was none on the ground. The sorcerers had charmed all the blood back into Dabura's head."

"What did Dabura do then?"

"Dabura went home to his house. He walked all the way. I saw him do it myself."

"Dabura was quite well?"

"Oh yes! Dabura was quite well. We went to a dance in another village that night."

"Did Dabura dance?"

"Dabura danced until morning. I know that he did. I saw him do it. I walked home with him in the morning."

"You know that Dabura is not alive now?"

"Dabura died again next day."

Meantime, says the magistrate who records the case, the accused sorcerer was vastly bored by the disclosure of his amazing skill. He sat "yawning listlessly." It is maintained that this testimony is not fairly to be regarded as a malicious perjury, but, rather, as a preposterous fabrication, flowing innocently from the lips of the witness—a tale told as children tell the too remarkable tales of adventure in their own world of imaginary happenings.

XLVI

THE INVISIBLE SNAKE

IT is no very hard matter to set up as a sorcerer in Papua. One says, "I am a sorcerer!"—and the thing is accomplished. One may be a greater sorcerer, or a lesser sorcerer, to be sure; but one is a sorcerer of some degree of evil merit, at least, from the hour that one says, "I am a sorcerer!" Thereafter the measure of success a practitioner may win depends upon his skill in advertising and the ingenuity of his magical methods. What is new and mysterious is everywhere mightily impressive; and in Papua, as elsewhere, what a man noisily reiterates about himself comes eventually to be accepted as at least an approach to the truth concerning him. A certain Tai-imi, for example, having settled in a village of the Gira River, said, "I am a sorcerer!"—and he was forthwith a sorcerer. He said, "I have an invisible snake with which to work my will"—and his fame began. They said, "Where *is* the snake?" And he replied: "Have I not said that the snake is invisible? How can I show you an invisible snake?"—and his fame grew. He said, then, "I have *many* invisible snakes"—and his fame was established. And he added, "Beware of me, if you please, for I am very easily offended, and my in-

visible snakes obey me." Finding, now, that he was inspiring terror indeed, Tai-imi created an establishment to forward his consequence. Three menials were taken in to wait upon his wants at home; and two qualified assistants were engaged to attend his dignity abroad. To the qualified assistants, in enhancement of his own importance, Tai-imi gave invisible snakes. "They, too, are sorcerers," said he, "and have invisible snakes." And added, with the large, easy air of every great professional: "But the invisible snakes of my assistants, of course, are small and rather stupid snakes. *My* snake is the snake to beware of." Ingenious Tai-imi might have lived long in plenty had he not grown so intolerably extortionate in the matter of pigs that the administration got wind of his ways and made haste to confound his success.

It was shown upon trial that Tai-imi had founded his enormously lucrative practice upon nothing better than a bald assertion.

"I am a sorcerer," said he, "with an invisible snake."

A man who can terrorize a community can exact gifts and live at ease all the days of his life. Tai-imi's rise to prosperity illustrates the simplicity of the method. Yet sorcery is not a popular profession. It is too perilous for that. The Papuan sorcerer practises *puri-puri*—translated as "the power of making dead." And this brings him constantly under suspicion in a land where vengeance is a virtuous pursuit and a man's life is safe only in his own watchful keeping. In the philosophy of the primitive Papuan native there is no such thing as death from natural causes. Death is the result of either

violence or magic. Let a man be clubbed to death, and the native clearly comprehends the cause of the lamentable affair; but let a man die of pneumonia—a wicked machination is at the bottom of that death. Who is the sorcerer? And—*where* is the sorcerer? It is the dutiful obligation of the bereaved to discover the author of the machination, and either himself avenge it or employ a sorcerer of superior power to perform his vengeance for him. In the simple practice of medicine, moreover, which all sorcerers follow, as a matter of course, a sorcerer runs occasionally into the gravest sort of danger. It is easy for the native mind to assume that if the sorcerer has not cured his patient he has killed him; and as vengeance must be wreaked upon somebody—well, the sorcerer is probably guilty, and comes handy, anyhow. Not long since, in an inland village, a certain mother-in-law fell ill. A *puri-puri* man was fetched to her aid from a neighboring village. Could the *puri-puri* man cure the mother-in-law? Oh yes, the *puri-puri* man could surely cure the mother-in-law. The *puri-puri* man must have, however, as a fee for the cure, a dog and a pig. It was a bargain. The dog and the pig passed into the possession of the sorcerer and he set confidently to work. It was testified, in the course of the trial which presently came on, that the sorcerer, who was by this time the deceased in the case, had "made a few passes" over the mother-in-law and returned to his village.

"Now, my good woman," said he, upon departing, "you will get well."

This was not so.

"I called you to attend my mother-in-law?" demanded the son-in-law, when next the sorcerer came.

It was admitted.

"I paid you a dog and a pig?"

"You did."

"My mother-in-law is dead."

"Hum—" It is easy to imagine the consternation of the sorcerer.

"Very well, then," declared the son-in-law. "As I paid you a dog and a pig to cure my mother-in-law, and as you did not cure her, I am going to kill you."

Thereupon the son-in-law went off with two friends in search of weapons. Witnesses of what followed told the magistrate before whom the case was tried that the sorcerer made no attempt to escape—that he calmly awaited the inevitab' event. Presently the avengers returned. The son-in-law grievously speared the sorcerer; and the friends—lending countenance and aid—despatched him with their stone clubs. Not one of these men—declares the magistrate—could be persuaded that they had done anything out of the way. Had the sorcerer not been paid a dog and a pig for his medicine? And had not his cure failed? And was he not a sorcerer, anyhow?

A reputation for skill in sorcery is not to be cultivated with any degree of equanimity by the timid. Many a man, saddled, against his will, with this evil repute, goes to frantic lengths of denial. A case or two which may be found in the records of the Papuan courts, as described by the Administrator, may be cited to illustrate the peril into which even reputation may bring a native. A woman, Maudega, having visited at a neighboring village, set out upon her

return, in company with the daughter of Boiamai, a chief. Unhappily, the child of Boiamai was taken by a crocodile; and upon learning this Boiamai killed Maudega and certain others. "Yes, I killed Maudega," he admitted in the trial of the case; "but Maudega was a witch, you know, and had bewitched a crocodile to take my daughter." A Papuan, charged with the murder of an old woman, excused the crime in this way: that he had seen the old woman, who was unquestionably a witch, fly like a pigeon into his brother's house, where his brother lay ill, and tear open his brother's breast and gnaw at his liver; and in proof of the justice of what he had done, and in praise of his own presence of mind, no doubt, the Papuan maintained that as soon as he had killed the old woman his brother got quite well. Another case may be described: that of a native who saw two men of rather shady reputation put magical leaves in his father's path, in such a way, and with such wicked power and intention, that, when the old man came to these magical obstacles, he fell—and presently died. The son took prompt vengeance: he gathered his friends and killed the supposed sorcerers. "The elimination of the belief in sorcery," says the Administrator, in one of the reports, "would reduce serious crime in Papua to very small proportions; but such a complete reversal of ideas is too much to be hoped for at present, and the most that we can expect even the most civilized natives to realize is that sickness and death are not invariably to be ascribed to that cause."

XLVII

A SPIRITUALIST OF FERGUSON ISLAND

MAGIC touches the life of the New Guinea native in all its smallest concerns. It accounts for the incidents of every day. Whether good luck or misfortune befall, magic has managed the affair. A happy event is achieved by means of a sorcerer's incantation: a confusion of evil is the issue of a sorcerer's wicked spell. The menace of unfriendly sorcerers implies the urgent need of personal and alertly well-disposed sorcerers. "I am a more powerful sorcerer than the sorcerer of your enemy," says the wily magician, "and if you employ my skill your enemy's spells will be futile to annoy you." In the Gulf country, where sorcery is what is called rampant, every family or group in a village forming a *ravi* has its own sorcerer. It is said that this is imperative, so dangerous is the situation of the Gulf people: that the sorcerers of the bush people, living inland of the Gulf, who used to raid the coast, are most cunning sorcerers—that they take the form and flight of pigeons and ravage the waterside with magical misfortune. All unusual happenings and appearances are everywhere attributed to the sorcerers. A Resident Magistrate, visiting some of the Vailala River people for the first time, to establish

friendly relations, was accompanied to the coast villages by the head-man of one of the tribes. At Iokea the head-man fell in with a horse for the first time in his life, and found the spectacle so entertaining that he laughed until the tears came. "You are a mighty sorcerer, indeed," said he, gratefully, to the astonished Resident Magistrate, "and I thank you for having created this comical animal for my amusement." Every mishap, too, is of a *puri-puri* origin. A native came to the hospital at Samarai with a two-months-old dislocation of the shoulder which he attributed to the exercise of some sorcerer in an enemy's behalf. That the malevolent influence was exerted at the very instant when he had chanced to slip and tumble with his load did not impress him as being in the least significant. "A sorcerer did it," he maintained. The dislocation was reduced under chloroform—with the result that the native's respect for the practice of *puri-puri* in general was considerably increased.

"This *puri-puri*," said he, "is obviously a more potent *puri-puri* than the other."

It is a feat of some degree of skill, to be sure, but not beyond the power of the cleverest sorcerers, to establish a bereaved relative in communication with the spirit of his dead. A dreaded sorcerer, in the hills back of Begessi, on Ferguson Island, was commonly used to accomplish this; and when the magistrate of that district visited his ghostly dwelling to inquire into the matter a congregation of twenty natives—some of them had come from villages fifteen miles away—was found awaiting a connection with the other world, as it were, in precisely the same fashion, and with the same eager, shuddering hope,

no doubt, as a congregation of seekers at a spiritualistic séance in our own times and cities. Nor did the sorcerer behave in an unfamiliar way: he decamped—a sudden pretense that he must himself be at a distance to obtain the best effect—and his ill-gotten gain in native goods was confiscated. Establishing communication with spirits, of course, is one of the higher manifestations of the sorcerer's magic. Sorcery does not, however, disdain to indulge in mere impish mischief—evoking the wrath of the wind: as when six angry old women, wrecked in a squall off the village of Borio, demanded of the nearest magistrate the arrest and imprisonment of all the villagers of Borio, who had conspired with their sorcerers to annoy strangers passing in peace, and demanded, moreover, instant compensation for the loss of their canoe and cooking-pots. Sorcery may stoop even lower—to small revenges: as when a native village constable complained to the magistrate of his neighborhood that the bush pigs had been magically inspired to break into his garden and eat his taro in revenge upon him for assisting the magistrate to convict two sorcerers of some slight distinction. The latter incident, as the magistrate recounts it, fairly illustrates the native's attitude of annoyance toward the ignorance and stupidity of all those white men who do not believe in sorcery and its common employment.

"You recall Andugai and Serawabai," said the constable to the magistrate, "the sorcerers whom you let out of jail a week ago?"

The magistrate easily recalled Andugai and Serawabai.

"They have come to my village," the constable

complained, "and *puri-puri* the bush pigs to eat my taro."

"How do you know that Andugai and Serawabai *puri-puri* the bush pigs?"

"When they came to my village, they said: 'This village policeman got us three months in jail. We must be revenged upon him. Let us damage his garden. Let us *puri-puri* the bush pigs to eat up his taro.' And they have done this very thing."

"Did anybody *hear* them say that?"

"Of course not! Andugai and Serawabai are not fools!"

"How do you know that they *did* say it?"

"Was I not the cause of their imprisonment? What more reasonable thing *could* they say?"

"You have no witnesses?"

"No."

"How long is it since you repaired your fence?"

"About six months."

"Go mend your fence."

The point is this: that when the constable left the magistrate, in great ill temper with this judgment, the magistrate heard him remark to the interpreter, in the manner of one hopelessly disgusted, "Why, *that* fellow doesn't know a *thing* about the customs of the country!"

It is vain to argue. "You just don't know what you're talking about," sighs the native, wearied of the white man's skepticism: "we were *born* here, and *know* about sorcery—*we* understand." A fixed conviction of this sort was displayed by the Maisin people. There was an extraordinary number of deaths in the Maisin villages. Greatly perturbed

by this mystery, for which they could account in only one way, the Maisin natives concluded that their Kubiri neighbors were at the bottom of the trouble. "Look here, now, you have been making *puri-puri* against us," said they to the Kubiri neighbors; "and if you don't pay for the lives your sorcerers have taken—*we'll puri-puri you!*" There was no threat of violence; it was merely a threat of magic—and the Kubiri people paid over the pigs in terrified haste. Everywhere the sorcerers are objects of detestation—of fear and hatred. A native who believes himself to be under a sorcerer's spell is well-nigh doomed. "It is almost impossible," says one of the magistrates, "to save his life." Nor are cases of death infrequently noted. In illustration of this curious circumstance, the Administrator ("Papua") tells of an intelligent native of Rossel Island who was being slowly bewitched to death. The man was reduced to skin and bones; he could neither eat nor sleep, but wandered aimlessly from village to village, dying. Assured that no sorcerer could have power aboard an official ship, the wretched native was taken off on the *Merrie England*, and presently recovered. "If he had not come along, he would have died," remarks the Administrator, "and, morally, the sorcerer would have been guilty of his death, though through the medium of the man's own imagination." A well-informed native may protect himself from these wicked charms, however, by taking care that no hair of his head, no parings of his finger-nails, no betel-nut of his—and the like of such things—shall fall into a sorcerer's hands, to be laid upon a sorcerer's stone, causing illness and death. To make quite sure of immunity, he must, on Rossel

Island, for example, carry away the scraps of his food from a stranger's table, and cast them into the sea.

A sorcerer might get them!

"If you should need to throw the husk of a cocoanut overboard from your canoe," a Rossel Island native explained, "first immerse it."

And why?

"It might float ashore, you see; a sorcerer might get hold of it."

Circumspection so watchful and complete implies an abject fear. And the fear is truly abject. A celebrated sorcerer of the Main Range was charged by his community with the death of nine natives. It seems that the men had died of sheer fright. The sorcerer used no charms: he *willed* (said he) the death of his victims. "Burning within me," he confessed to the magistrate, "is a power as fierce as fire." A certain Toulu—being of an aspect most evil, and blind in one eye, he was admirably equipped for the practice of sorcery—carried his inspiration of terror into the very jail where he was confined. A dozen fellow-prisoners lived flat on their bellies in this dreadful presence—crawling and squirming like worms. As this attitude of reverence was not at all suited to the efficient employment of crowbars in road-work, which is something the prisoners were laboriously attempting, when the magistrate came by, it was sternly forbidden; but when the magistrate turned in his track to look back, he found the jailer bent double and every last man of that terrified prison gang flat on his belly again the while he painfully operated with his crowbar. It is upon fear of this quality that extortion easily practises. A Tro-

briand sorcerer, says one of the magistrates, whispered in the ear of a doomed native that an enemy had purchased his death. "However, he is a mean man," the sorcerer added, "and did not pay me so very much to kill you." Of course the doomed native promptly paid more for his immunity than the enemy had paid for his death. "This man has rewarded me largely to dispose of *you*," the sorcerer informed the enemy, "and I fear that I can accomplish nothing to save your life." And the startled enemy said, "Ah, ha, but I will pay more!" And the doomed native said in his turn, "Ah, ha, but I will pay even more than that!" And how long the transaction might have gone on nobody knows; for it was at this point that the extortionate sorcerer was taken into custody on the information of a cunning friend of both his victims.

XLVIII

INCANTATION

PRECISELY how the extortionate sorcerer would have procured the decease of either of his dupes is not very clear. The processes of sorcery are dark mysteries. Poison is suspected as the active agent in many cases; but it is not by any means sure that the Papuan native has a sufficient knowledge of any virulent poison with which to assist his incantations. One sorcerer, standing trial for his life, described his method as follows: that he had put some bark in a *bau-bau* (bamboo pipe), mixed with shreds of cocoanut, and, having plugged the end, he dug a trench, buried the pipe, made a fire on the grave, removed the *bau-bau*, hid it in a hole in a tree, took it out at night, and poured the contents down his victim's throat while he slept. It is not a convincing tale. A case of divination, however, was noted by an observer in the government service on Rossel Island. It was designed to disclose the name of a murderer. The sorcerer collected some twenty-five leaves from the bush, worked them with water, rolled them into a little ball with the soles of his feet, and laid the ball in the sun to dry. A black ant was then taken alive and put in the ball: the head of a black slug, also—a slug which the natives fear for its power to dis-

charge a fluid (they say) which causes blindness. All being ready, now, the sorcerer took the magical ball in his left hand and required the people to gather and question him. "Was it Kariba that killed Warari?" they asked. "Was it Buna? Was it Obirami? Are you sure it was not Kariba? Are you sure it was not Buna?" In the mean time the sorcerer worked his fingers and the muscles of his arms; and by and by—the arm being at last grown st' and painful beyond endurance—he moaned and slowly opened his fingers.

The unfortunate whose name chanced to be called at that moment was declared to be the guilty man.

"How do you know," the observer inquired, "that he is the guilty man?"

"My arm," the sorcerer replied, "got hot and like a stone."

It is remarked by this observer that the sorcerer seemed to believe in his singular power—that he was at least an honest man and no grasping charlatan. It is not uncommon, indeed, to come upon a sorcerer who appears to have the utmost faith in his mysteries. One celebrated feat of the sorcerers is the restoration of the dead to life. It is not maintained that the restoration is permanent—the matter of an hour or two, rather, a day or two at most; as in the case of the dead Dabura who came to life in response to the incantations of the yawning sorcerer and danced all night. "Why should you doubt this thing?" a sorcerer demanded, in retort. "You, too, have your sorcerers. With my own eyes I saw one of your great sorcerers kill a man by putting *puri-puri* [chloroform] to his face, then cut him open with a knife, and bring him to life again. The man

was dead. There was plenty of blood. I saw it myself. Why should we not be able to do the same?" Sometimes a sorcerer will have the temerity to attempt a demonstration. Temerity, to be sure, it is—a curious sincerity, too. And this sincerity never fails to impress the beholder. In one case a constable, who had been a noted sorcerer in his day, undertook, for the edification of a magistrate, to restore a lizard which he had killed with a stick. "I have been in the government service," said he, doubtfully, "and it may be that my power has departed." And so it turned out: no charm that he had—and he was fully half an hour at the business—had the least effect. He was plainly discouraged; and, moreover—it is related—he was genuinely astonished to find that his spells were impotent. It seemed that he could not for the life of him comprehend this glaring failure of the usual charms. "Ah, well," said he, "I had no preparation; and, anyhow, I have been out of practice for a long time. And I have been in the government service, too. That's the *real* trouble." A story is told of an old witch who professed this power very noisily, but, being entreated to display it, flatly declined; nor could she be moved from her decision.

"No, no, no!" she protested. "I couldn't do it to-day."

"Why not to-day?"

"I've taken a bath."

An oversight of the sorcerers is kept by the native constables—some two hundred and fifty raw Papuans, armed with carbines, uniformed in a blue serge jumper and sulu, and acting, with limited authority, under the direction of the magistrates.

Minor operations are ignored: selling love charms—the like of that. And the matter of rain-making is of no consequence, provided, of course, that wind and rain are not provoked in malice to discomfit a legitimate undertaking. Let the rain-maker take his sorcerer's stone, wrap it in a leaf, put it in the shallows of a creek; the leaf will annoy the stone with its offensive odor, to be sure, and rain will come of it; but no harm is worked, except the aggravation of the stone. It is extortion and tyranny and bloodshed that the constables must report. Many of the village policemen, however, are themselves fast in the grip of the village sorcerers; and the force is in general so briefly removed from the savage state that discipline sometimes yields to superstition in the test. It is related of two constables, returning by sea from an errand down the coast, that, being delayed at Pongani by a tedious storm, they arrested the local rain-maker and put him in irons, charging him specifically with interfering with the expeditious transaction of the king's business. Presently they released him; for the storm did not abate, so contumacious was the rain-maker; and the officers of the law were persuaded that it never would abate, as the rain-maker plainly intimated, until the rain-maker's disposition was reformed by the removal of his irons and his release from custody. "I set him free," one of the constables explained, "lest our services be lost to the government for ever." Another case in which there was a swift, pardonable reversion to savagery is described by Mr. J. H. P. Murray, the Administrator of the Territory, in his book, *Papua*. A constable of one of the northern villages, with a sorcerer in custody,

A RESIDENT MAGISTRATE.

was proceeding up a river, bound to a magistrate's station; and the sorcerer took advantage of this last opportunity in a desperate endeavor to intimidate his captor and thus procure his own escape.

Having furnished himself with a string and a number of small sticks, the sorcerer inquired of the constable:

"You remember your father?"

"I do."

"I killed him."

A stick was ceremoniously tied to the sorcerer's long string—a disquieting performance.

"You remember your mother?"

"I do."

"I killed her."

A silence then—and a second stick was attached to the long string.

"You remember your brother?"

"I do."

"I killed him too. You remember your sister?"

"I do."

"Well, I killed *her*."

When the sorcerer had seventeen significant sticks attached to his long string the patience of the constable broke. With the help of his crew the constable seized the sorcerer and held his head underwater until he was drowned.

It is the Resident Magistrate who must deal with all the ills of sorcery—the restraint and cure of the bloody superstition; and most of them throw up their hands in despair, with the remark that the thing is of pestilential effect and proportions. Apart from the troubles the sorcerers make for him, the

life of the New Guinea Resident Magistrate—if the description is accurate—has enough of difficulty to make it unenviable. "Aside from a working knowledge of the law as applied to Papuan affairs," said a Resident Magistrate of the Northern Division, once, apparently greatly annoyed with the circumstances of his life, "a Resident Magistrate must have a knowledge of bookkeeping, infantry drill, bone-setting and simple surgery, medicine, road-making, surveying, building, boat-sailing, and the Motuan language. He must learn the attitude of the various tribes toward the government and toward one another, and their peculiarities; he must be physically capable of resisting malaria and dysentery, and of keeping pace with the constabulary in long, rough marches, also of maintaining discipline in the jails and station, as well as among two or three hundred crude savages employed as carriers or as laborers. He must also be prepared to spend weeks alone with the natives, to spend most of his pay in living expenses, at the end of a few years to have his health shattered and to be useless for any other occupation, and to be the recipient of a constant stream of abuse both locally and in the public press, with the prospect that, unless he is lucky enough to get killed or die before he is incapable of any longer doing his work, he can starve in Australia or in New Guinea at the end." It is not a happy life, perhaps—the life of the New Guinea Resident Magistrate. Yet I fancy that not all of them would care very much to return from this land of sorcery and jungle and savage native life to the comparatively dull paths of Sydney and Melbourne and the Australian outlands. In New Guinea, they say, life has not yet been di-

vested of queer contacts with its primitive mysteries; and this confusion of magic and ancient custom with the modern facts of law and the promise of prosperity is pleasant enough in some of its phases—a measure of reward, at any rate, to the adventurous soul.

XLIX

THURSDAY ISLAND

AFTER Port Moresby, the Singapore-bound packet recrosses the Coral Sea to Torres Strait, pausing, there, at Thursday Island. A passage of Torres Strait and its vast approaches, which lie strewn from coast to coast with coral reefs and patches and sand-bars and nigger-heads, between the Australian Cape York and the New Guinea cannibal shore, is a stirring incident of the road from Sydney to Singapore. "Caught here in foul weather," a parody of the sailing directions runs, "anchor and pray!" It is a wide stretch, one hundred miles at least, between Cape York and New Guinea; and there should be ample room for haste and free sailing; yet no more than two narrow and tortuous paths are certainly known to lead through the coral —courses like faint forest trails; so that these shallows wear the reputation of being the worst water in the world. Navigation here intently, nervously concerns itself with the color of the water—the brown over the bars, the beryl over the reefs, the blue of the deep passages; nor only with the color of the water—with the odors abroad in a thick night. "I can *smell* the coral in the dark," the captain of a packet boasted; declaring a more credible perform-

ance, indeed—preposterous as it may appear—than the transatlantic skippers who say, "I can smell the ice." The packet approaches the long event with alert caution, as though, however careless her behavior may have been in the Coral Sea, she must now, at last, giving over frivolity and the habit of somnolence for a day and a night, attend strictly to business. She slows down, forges ahead, swerves in a sharp arc, comes to half-speed, stops dead, steams confidently forward, pauses in suspicion for soundings, and repeats all this bewildered behavior as though she had never passed that way before, and would take jolly good care never to tumble into such a mess again—all the while peering out and feeling for a course. And by and by, having picked the way to Prince of Wales Channel, she ties up at the wharf at Thursday Island and is half-way through from sea to sea.

An ample, rosy woman, the landlady, her face in a pucker of anxiety, bustled out of the chief public-house to meet our arrival from the packet.

"'As the beer come?" she panted.

It was a swift exposition of the dreary pleasures of Thursday Island—and of the infinitely more dreary lack of them. And here, too, was a dreary hotel. A veranda overlooked the painted harbor water, where some little luggers of the pearling fleet lay at anchor, with the rolling, jungle shores of the islands half vanished in a mist of heat beyond—a prospect streaked and splashed with beryl and cream and blue and violet and brown. The town lay up from the waterside, wilting in the sun: a broad street, with a scorched boulevard of grassy sand and a row of dead young trees; dusty shops kept by

Japanese and Chinamen; sleepy cottages overgrown with flowering, tropical vines; buzzing native quarters; iron shanties, crowded close, at haphazard; a population of Japanese, Cingalese, Chinamen, Filipinos, Solomon Islanders, Papuans, Fijians, Malays, Aboriginals, Europeans, Australians. Life was a listless, sordid procession of hours, ticked off too slowly. What humor there was in our neighborhood, at any rate, came only from the tart lips of the landlady and a contemplation of the public-house bath. The bath was an ingenious arrangement, pretty generally to be met with in these isolated tropical towns—an American oil-can and a rope and tackle. One filled the can from a bucket and hauled it overhead; and then one twitched a string, thus opening the punctured bottom of the can—whereupon a brief deluge of tepid rain-water.

Thursday Island is a pearling station of some consequence. Pearls and shell, with *bêche-de-mer* and turtle, account for the residence of its fifteen hundred inhabitants, black, yellow, and white, in that dreary, broiling exile. It is, nevertheless, a port of call so familiar and friendly in those obscure quarters of the world that it wears an affectionate nickname. Gibraltar is "Gib" to the Atlantic and Mediterranean; Thursday Island is "T. I." to the East Indies and the nearer South Seas. All the roving craft—the traders and shell-prospectors—put in for pleasure and supplies; and every adventurer and abandoned wretch of the Northern Territory and New Guinea makes it a metropolis for the scene of his occasional desperate frivolities. In prospect, it appears to be a swarming, wild, flaring town, like

the wicked old Port Said. It turns out to be, however—so searching and firm are the fingers of the Queensland law—a dull, orderly little place, with nothing more reprehensible than a highly respectable picture-show to enliven the open life of its nights: an odoriferous hall, where Japanese, Chinese, Solomon-Islanders, and Australian Aboriginals eagerly follow the melodrama of cowboy life in America. Taking the truth of the tales for granted, the crocodiles, which infest the rivers and beaches of all the north Australian coast, are the liveliest visitors in town. Upon rare occasions they are said to adventure boldly and with unexpected cunning from the water to the lower street: so that—the thing being known, and no matter, indeed, how unusual the occurrence and improbable the recurrence—it is a shuddering business for any stranger, with ghastly crocodile yarns rumbling in his ears, to traverse the raided territory in the dark. We were told, and had no reason to doubt the tale, that a monstrous crocodile had not long before chased a little girl up the street and into the shelter of a public-house, scrambling close upon her terrified heels.

A Chinaman was said to have vanished on the edge of town, within sight of the hotel veranda; the last they heard of the poor wretch was a shrill Chinese squeal of horror, and the last they saw of him was the light of his lantern bobbing toward the water.

"Man rescued his mate from a crocodile over on one of the islands," said the town barber, casually, touching a match to his pipe. "Mate was pretty badly mauled. And the—"

Puff!

"—man hauled him up on the beach and came over to T. I. for help. And the—"

Puff, puff!

"—mate wasn't there when he got back. And we—"

Puff!

"—reckon it was—"

Puff, puff, puff!

"—'nother croc."

It is told of a surveyor that he measured a basking crocodile by means of his instruments—taking sights and angles from a reasonably short distance—and that he worked out the length of the crocodile to be thirty-five feet! This remarkable result is ascribed to an error in the surveyor's calculations due to a pardonable trepidation. Crocodiles of twenty feet, however—even of twenty-eight feet, it is asserted—have been shot. Sly, powerful beasts they are, indeed. A horse, taken by the shoulder, dragged a crocodile for forty yards before he could release himself; and a full-grown buffalo, taken by the head while drinking, was carried off bodily and drowned. The story is told of a trooper, bathing in one of the rivers, who, tiring a little, swam for rest toward what seemed surely to be a floating log; the log turned out to be a crocodile, and the crocodile took the trooper by the head, within sight of his comrades, and carried him off. It is said of the aborigines that, being taken, they thrust their fingers in the crocodile's eyes and sometimes save themselves in this way; and an incredible tale of escape is in common circulation—that an aborigine, carried away by the feet and deposited at the bottom of a pool in the river for future consumption, played 'possum all the

while and swam to shore when his captor left him. It will appear, thus, that the crocodile is to be reckoned with—that he is no bogie of the rivers and beaches, but a live, horrible peril. The aborigines are well aware of the degree of this peril and cautious in the presence of it; and as for the Europeans, no seasoned white man of sound mind would put himself in the way of giving a crocodile the advantage of him. When a considerable number of aborigines cross a crocodile-infested stream they beat the water with sticks and chant a great commotion—taking the precaution, of course, to send their women first.

L

TIGER-SHARK

DIVING for shell, and incidentally for the litt
treasure of pearl—it has been estimated th
one shell in a thousand contains a pearl—is carri
on in deeper water off Thursday Island than an
where else. Other productive beds lie comparativ
ly shallow—the Persian Gulf, the Sulu Seas, the G
of Manaar. The greatest depth at which a diver
helmet and dress can perform any sort of use
labor is held to be one hundred and eighty-two fe
At that depth a Spanish diver raised £9,000 in silv
bars from a wreck off Finisterre. At one hundr
and fifty feet an English diver salved £50,000 fr
a wreck off Leuconna Reef of the Chinese coa
The maximum depth to which the sponge-fishers
the Mediterranean successfully descend is one hu
dred and fifty feet. In the Torres Strait, with
depletion of the beds, the divers have moved fr
the shallow water of from four to six fathoms
depths of one hundred and twenty feet, where
operation is a distressful and perilous one. A
ternal law prohibits diving beyond a specified de
of safety; but as the courts have held that a di
must be actually seen at that depth, if anybod
to be held amenable, and as the reefs are rem

from any practical scheme of supervision, it is a law of small consequence, after all, and the perilously deep diving goes on, no doubt, much as before, with its occasional issue of sudden death. Subjected to a hazardous degree of atmospheric pressure—at one hundred feet it is sixty pounds to the square inch—the divers are attacked by various characteristic disturbances: pains in the muscles and joints, for example ("the bends"), and deafness, spells of fainting, and paralysis, otherwise known as "diver's palsy." The effects appear when the diver ascends too rapidly from deep water and the pressure is removed. It is then that the cases of sudden death occur—the diver found dead in his helmet or expiring on the deck when the helmet is removed.

At Thursday Island the luggers—smart, seaworthy little fellows of eighteen or twenty tons, bright with paint—are manned and outfitted. They are small for the big task of weathering the winds that blow over the reefs and shallows of that perilous water. It is sharp seamanship and a dependable weather-lore, for which the Japanese skippers are celebrated, that accomplish an escape from the sudden, sweeping gales: such a gale, for example, as cleared the west-coast grounds of the fleet—a wind that picked some luggers out of the water and dropped them in the mangroves a hundred yards from the beach. In the Gulf of Manaar, the Ceylon beds, the divers go naked after the shell, for the most part—a plunge with a cord and sink-stone, and with a spike of ironwood to ward off the sharks while the baskets are being filled; and they continue diving thus time after time, remaining below for from fifty to eighty

seconds, until exhausted. It is recorded that divers of the Gulf of Manaar have been known to remain underwater for six minutes; but at Thursday Island, where the *bêche-de-mer* men dive naked, this is laughed at for a preposterous tale. The longest time a man can remain underwater (they say) is two minutes—not much more, at any rate; and should he continue these intervals, at a great depth, he will presently bleed at the nose and mouth and will eventually collapse on the deck of his lugger. It is maintained, moreover, that the coastal aborigines are the greatest of all swimmers—that, being well oiled for the occasion, they can go as deep and swim as long as any man. A blackboy, fishing *bêche-de-mer*, will search the bottom for these sea-slugs in the course of one dive, and gather a heap, depositing it in a convenient spot; and he will fill his arms, when he has collected their full burden, and at last wriggle swiftly to his dinghy, emerging with a load that might tax the strength and incommode the progress of a man on a highroad ashore.

In these days there is very little naked diving after shell out of Thursday Island. The divers are clad in helmet and dress; and there is difficulty enough, even so. The depth is great, the ground may be treacherous—a diver may fall from a height even at the bottom of the sea—and the sharks are numerous and big and voracious.

One midday a score of little luggers came drifting into the harbor at Thursday Island with a light wind.

"Dead Jap," opined the customs official.

"No black flag," the barber objected. "Where's your half-master?"

"Boy bitten by a shark, then."

HAULING A PEARL-DIVER ABOARD

"Oh, roiled water!"

"Quite an immunity from death of late," the customs official casually observed.

"Only five in six months."

"A Jap and a Malay and three Papuans."

"Seventy-nine," said the barber, "in the six months previous."

As a matter of statistical fact, ten per cent. of the Torres Strait divers die every year from the immediate effects of their vocation. It is a short life (they say) and a bitter one, fit only for the yellow and brown men, the Japanese and Papuans and Manila men and Island boys — the Japanese, especially, who are tough fellows, sullenly reckless of their days, and thinking of life only in terms of hard labor and brief intervals of violent pleasure.

Torres Strait swarms with tiger-sharks; and as the tiger-shark grows to a length of twenty feet in these latitudes, and is a particularly voracious and pugnacious customer, anywhere encountered, he is an enemy to beware of. A brownish-yellow bulk, ornamented with transverse bands or rounded spots, furnished with a gigantic blade-like tail, and having a length of twenty feet: measured off on the carpet of a man's quiet home—and, regarded with the eye of the imagination, given hungry speed in the dusky water—it is enough to make a man shudder in his library chair! It was not roiled water that had brought the score of luggers into harbor at Thursday Island while we sat watching with the barber and the customs official. It was, as the customs official had suggested, a Jap boy bitten by a shark; and as the poor fellow was carried to the hospital, we were

informed, with a torn shoulder and a seared face, he protested that he would never go down again—that diving was "finish" for him. Many another Torres Strait diver has come to the same conclusion after a precisely similar experience. A diver's "nerve" breaks; he has no heart for the risk again—always an imminent risk. Divers have been known to vanish—to take the plunge and be carried off without a bubble or a ripple to indicate the moment of this horrible death. The man in helmet and dress is in danger if he is not alert. He has a weapon at hand, however; when attacked he signals for more air and frightens his cowardly enemy away with a volley of bubbles. Yet he may be taken in a momentary lapse of caution. I recall the case of a diver whose life-line suddenly, mysteriously parted; his mates dived to his rescue at once, but no trace of the man was ever found, and there was but one reasonable way in which to account for his disappearance—a shark had undoubtedly taken him.

It is said that the coastal aborigine is not greatly afraid of a shark—that he is a match for a shark indeed in fair water, when not taken unaware. He may lose a leg or an arm, or he may be carried off bodily; but in any event the damage will be due rather to the cunning approach of the shark than to the limitations of the diver. Fairly warned, he will dive to the bottom, roil the water, and thus elude the attack; and if he is pugnaciously disposed at the moment (they say)—if the shark impolitely interrupts him at a critical or deeply interested moment—he will give fight. It is true, of course, that the naked divers are accustomed to escape by roiling the water: such instances are common; but I have

no stomach for the tale that any man will go out of his way to challenge combat with a twenty-foot tiger-shark—even when angered by an untimely interruption. I recall two stories of narrow escape. The one concerns a young Japanese diver who was taking a crayfish to the surface, and all at once found himself in a furious engagement. It was incautious of the diver to have a crayfish in his possession: the sharks are inordinately fond of crayfish; and this indiscreet diver came out of the consequent encounter with a lacerated thigh and one arm missing. The other story is hardly credible, related far from the scene: I cannot vouch for it, at any rate, having had no means of authenticating it; but as I have not hesitated to swallow it whole, and have been pleasantly moved to shudder and thrill and exclaim aghast, I will tell it for what it is worth. It seems that a black *bêche-de-mer* boy, swimming, naked and abstracted, close to the reef in search of slugs, awoke all at once to an amazing situation. It was not that the shark was near—not that it had turned and was darting; but that *his head was actually in the shark's wide-open mouth.* The black boy acted sharply: he withdrew his head in a flash, having at the same time "punched" the shark (as they put it) to distract attention from the matter in hand: and he rescued himself after a brisk tussle, and lived to prove the adventure with a scarred cheek.

LI

PEARL-SHELL AND PIRACY

IT is not from the pearls that the fleet-owner derives his profit. It is from the shell. Not long ago a great pearl from the Thursday Island grounds was exhibited in Melbourne—a perfect pearl of thirty-two and one-half grains, valued then at £1,000. It was a rare find. The quest of the pearl is so uncertain at best, however, and the honesty of the divers so doubtful, and their tricks of concealment so sly and cunning and many, that the pearling owner, to put his undertaking on a dependable basis, yields the pearls to the crews in an arrangement for their labor, and takes a sure profit from the sale of the shell. Shell is cash at Thursday Island, as safe and potent as legal tender; it can surely be marketed, and fetches a hundred pounds a ton, more or less—having once soared to four hundred pounds a ton. In a recent year the value of the Australian export of shell was more than £300,000; in the same year the value of the pearls exported was not quite £100,000. Now that the quest of the pearl has been systematized to what is called a cold business proposition, the romance has gone out of it—a romance of a divertingly blood-curdling description; yet there is an occasional incident of a sort to raise the hair

of a man whose feet are used to pavements and whose heart beats quickly when the unusual confronts him.

Not many years ago a Malay proa was wrecked on the Australian coast and the crew of six fell into the hands of a band of aborigines. The blacks were not savages; they were half-civilized fellows—speaking pidgin English, some of them, and acquainted with the power and measure of the law. What followed was as cold and deliberate a piece of treachery as could be practised by shapes in a nightmare. The blacks undertook to lead the Malays to Bowen Strait, and to help with the burden of the goods they had saved from the wreck, but misled them to a swamp instead, and there went into camp with them for the night, apparently in the most amiable fashion. At that time, they protested subsequently when brought to trial, the blacks had not intended to kill the Malays. It seems they had misled the Malays to the swamp in order to despatch them conveniently and in security if the inclination should irresistibly overtake them. The inclination *might* overtake them, to be sure. One never *could* tell what might happen; and if the inclination *should* overtake them—the swamp would be an admirable place for the operation. No doubt the blacks foresaw the issue well enough, yet waited to determine the deed —like a cowardly man tricking his conscience —until the propitious moment should arrive and the affair could be undertaken and accomplished before there was time for reconsideration.

At any rate, there was a frank discussion among the blacks in camp—the Malays and blacks sitting together, smiling together, on seeming friendly and

faithful terms; and the subject of that discussion was the advisability of disposing of the Malays. The Malays heard every word that was spoken, but, having no knowledge of the blacks' language, could not understand a single fateful syllable, and were therefore neither warned nor perturbed, but doubtless, if they attended at all, fancied that the conversation had to do with the road to Bowen Strait, or some such matter as that. A man may here employ his imagination at pleasure—construct for himself an Australian tropical swamp, isolated from any chance of a saving interruption, and a little group of castaway Malays resting in the illusion of security, and a band of naked blackfellows, and an exchange of reassuring smiles and a casually proceeding discussion, continued freely within hearing of the doomed wretches whom it concerned, but all unknown to them. As a matter of fact, the following discussion is not invented at all, but paraphrased in colloquial English from the testimony adduced at the trial, and fairly represents what occurred.

"Let's kill 'em."

"Oh no; we don't want to kill 'em."

"Yes; let's kill 'em. It will be much easier to take their goods away from them."

"Well, how'll we kill 'em?"

"Let's cut some clubs and club 'em."

"If we kill 'em we'll get into trouble."

"No, we won't. Nobody will ever know anything about it."

"Oh, what's the use of killing 'em?"

"Well. let's go in the bush and cut the clubs, anyhow."

"Might as well cut the clubs."

"Come on, then!"—and once the clubs were cut from the bush the doom of the Malays was sealed.

Not long ago, on the pearling-grounds of the west coast, there was an instance of old-fashioned piracy. It had all the elements a romancer could wish for—except the intervention of Providence and the escape of the hero. Captain Biddles and Captain Riddell, each of whom owned a pearling-fleet on the grounds off Cape Bossutt, met in Broome on the eve of a cruise of inspection. Captain Riddell wagered Captain Biddles that his schooner would reach the Cape Bossutt grounds first; and so it was arranged—a race of these crack schooners. There was a light wind next day. At sundown Captain Biddles observed that Captain Riddell's *Ethel* was mysteriously standing out to sea. He could not account for this erratic behavior. It troubled him when, next morning, the *Ethel* was not in sight; and upon returning to Broome he reported the singular disappearance of Captain Riddell and his pearling-schooner: whereupon the Malay Islands, Borneo, Singapore, and Penang were notified that something had gone amiss. The mystery of the *Ethel* was presently solved. The tale is that of the Chinese cook whose life was indiscreetly spared by the mutineers. A Malay named Pedro proposed a mutiny, and, a majority of the crew falling in with him, he initiated the execution of his design by tomahawking the man at the wheel, and tomahawking another white man who chanced to be on deck, and treacherously stabbing Captain Riddell, who was in the cabin looking at the chart and was taken unaware. Pedro proceeded thereafter according to

the best traditions. He took command of the ship; he had the dead men chained together and thrown overboard; he served liquor to hearten the crew; he put on a sword and sash; he killed an aborigine and threw him to the sharks; he cleansed the schooner of blood, put in at one of the Malay Islands, secreted the pearls and shell ashore, scuttled the schooner, and made for the Straits Settlements. It was a departure from the traditions—"dead men tell no tales"—that cost him dear in the end. He had spared the life of the Chinese cook—and the cook informed.

Beyond Thursday Island, on the road to Singapore lies Port Darwin, of the Northern Territory—the last port of Australia—a far-away little tropical town on a windy bluff above a deep-blue harbor. It was in a glare of blistering white sunlight when we landed. Port Darwin is the chief settlement of this vast, vacant land—a total area of 523,620 square miles, which in acres measures 335,116,800. The European population of the whole, at the time of the last census, was 1,729, which is the same as saying one European to every three hundred square miles. In addition there were 1,302 Chinese, 90 Japanese, and 146 others. It may be mentioned, too, that the daily average number of the population in jail was 26; but this relatively remarkable number doubtless included a goodly proportion of aborigines, of whom it is estimated the Territory nourishes some 20,000. Port Darwin is connected with a distant world by means of the overland telegraph, a stretch of wire measuring 2,230 miles, which runs south through the dry interior, and it will by and by be

connected with the rest of the Australian world by a transcontinental railroad—perhaps Port Darwin to Adelaide of South Australia: which, by the way, would bring London within eighteen days of Melbourne. The Northern Territory is the Never-Never of Australia. It is in the first raw stage of the making, now—a slow and still doubtful development. There lies the land, at any rate, and for any man's taking—the last Australian wilderness—vast tropical spaces awaiting occupation—browsing herds and fields of cotton and paddy and tobacco. It waits, all vacant, still, as the New South Wales wilderness once waited, and the Queensland acres waited, conferring wealth at last on the pioneers who had the foresight and the hardihood to challenge fortune.

On the road from Sydney to Singapore the swarming brown cities of Java are the next ports of call. We called at Surabaya, Samarang, and Batavia; and then we crossed the Java Sea, and a patch of the China Sea—a passage in gray, misty weather—to Singapore, which was the end of the Australian détour from the main-traveled 'round-the-world road. It had been a slow, rolling passage from Port Darwin—a sleepy passage, loafing along the Line, in pleasant blue weather. We awoke, all at once, like men reluctant and yawning from a doze in spring sunshine, and went ashore. It was like waking from a dream; and there was that refreshment, presently—sleep having left the eyes—which follows upon good rest. We remember the shipmates of the long voyage as the people of a dream—familiar, unreal faces, drifting through an easy sleep; and all the

cradled way of that breezy blue passage is a separate experience, like a dream, its elements abrupt and surprising and acceptable, and its end a complete termination and return to the usual happenings of life, the interval of it having no continuity with anything before or since. And I defy any man to sail from Sydney to Singapore, touching New Guinea, and the ports of Java, in the favorable season, and thereafter to possess this drowsy voyage as a definite reality. What remains, at the end of it all, will be a pleasant confusion of rocking and laughter, of warmth and stars and sunlit color, and of the neighborhood of blue water. Like this: the sun-soaked ship lying in the offing, on a flat, green sea, with the tropical odors of shore in the air—and coral shores and cocoanut islands and naked savages—and the fresh wind and flash and blue of the open—and the serene color of sea and sky—and mist of warm rain and falling dark—and a glow of light, and merry voices, and the clink of ice in glasses, and flapping awnings—and big black waves running in like mischievous children to break with a swish and flash of white and scamper away—and the morning trills and chirps and flights of song of the Dutch captain's canaries, and the noisy chatter of the Dutch captain's accomplished Dutch parrot.

THE END